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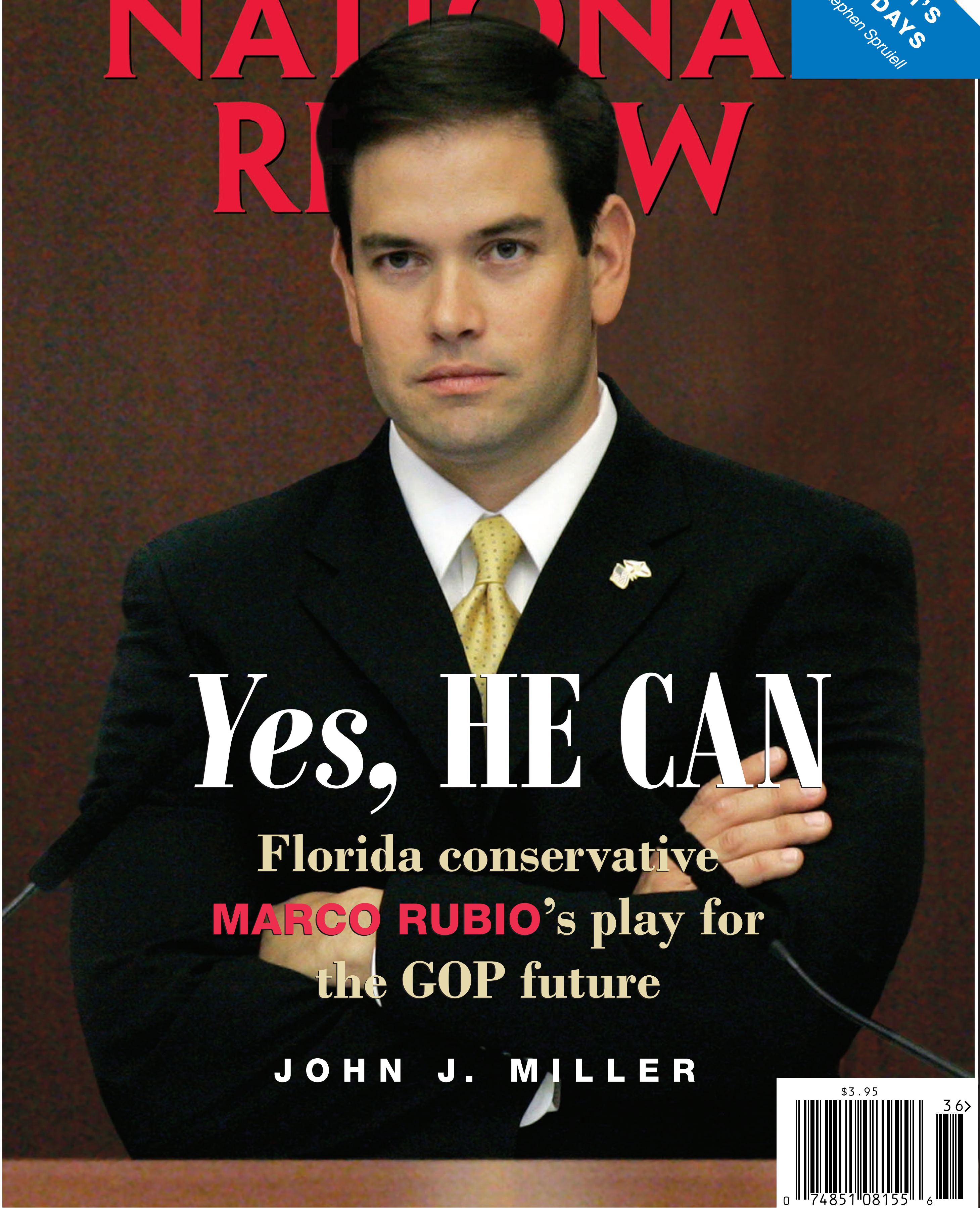

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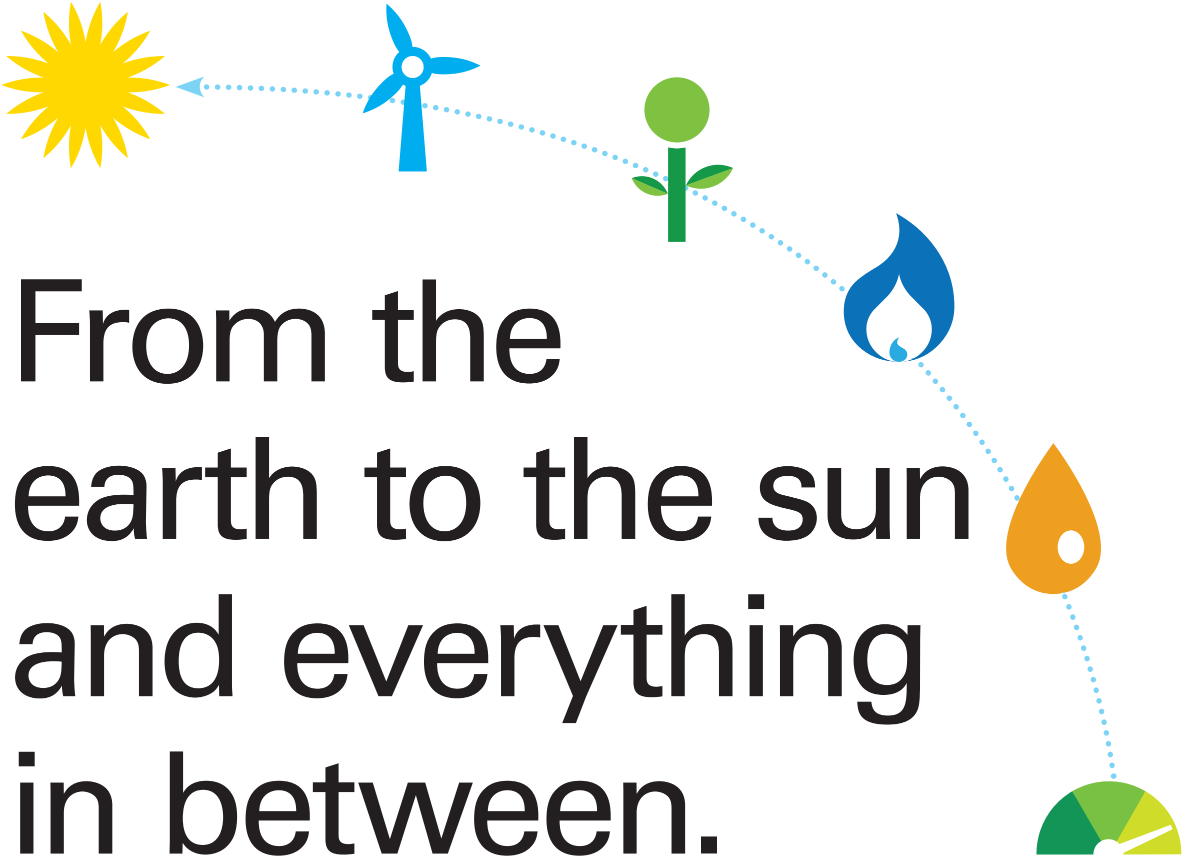

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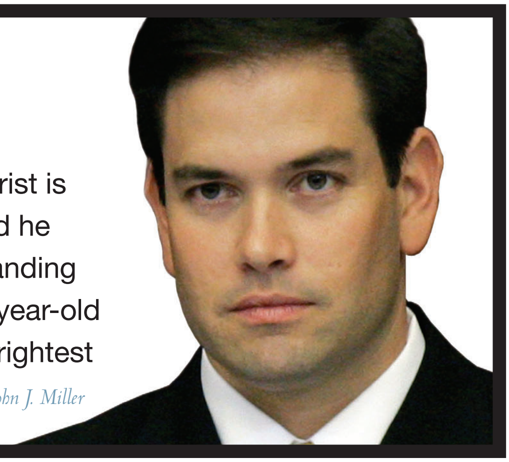

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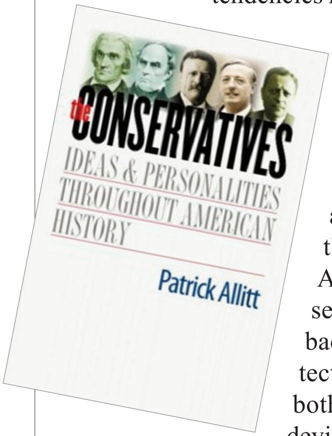
Letters

Defining 'Conservative'

For the most part I agree with Tod Lindberg's review of *The Conservatives*, by Patrick Allitt ("The Deepest Roots," August 10), and I certainly look forward to reading the book. However, I take exception to this assertion: "A conservative crank who hates America because he thinks egalitarianism's leveling tendencies have paved over the possibility of great achievement is no less a conservative than a conservative who cherishes American society for doing away with arbitrary hierarchical or class barriers to personal achievement."



Mr. Lindberg is right that conservatism is largely an attitude of reaction and prudence, as opposed to a mere collection of causes and policy positions. But there are specific principles and customs that the American conservative's temperament instinctively seeks to conserve. Our political and social principles go back to the English tradition of liberty and justice as protected by a limited government with separated powers. In both English and American history there are of course deviations from these principles, but just about every political event in that history contains a core element of pulling away from or seeking reform toward that very tradition—the American Revolution being a quintessential example of the latter.

So, anti-egalitarianism will never be a conservative attitude within the American political arena. Similarly, anyone who advocates limited government and the rule of law is indeed a conservative in that he seeks to conserve the attitude and principles handed down to us from the English tradition through the Founding Fathers.

Daniel Mencher
Long Beach, N.Y.

'Defecting' Conservative

In "The Carrie Effect" (August 10), Maggie Gallagher refers to a conservative defender of gay marriage as a "defector." As a gay conservative and a Republican, I find it disheartening to hear this kind of language directed at someone simply for disagreeing with the Right on this issue. Are not other issues, such as fiscal responsibility, lower taxes, and free-market economics, more important?

It is precisely this kind of rhetoric that prevents many conservative gay people from voting Republican.

Eric Armour
Nashville, Tenn.

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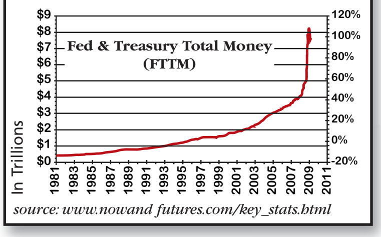

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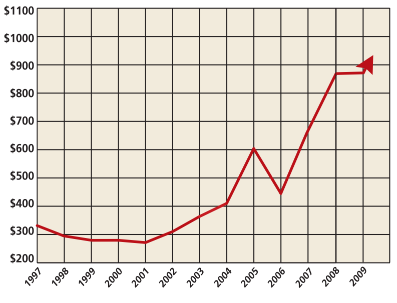

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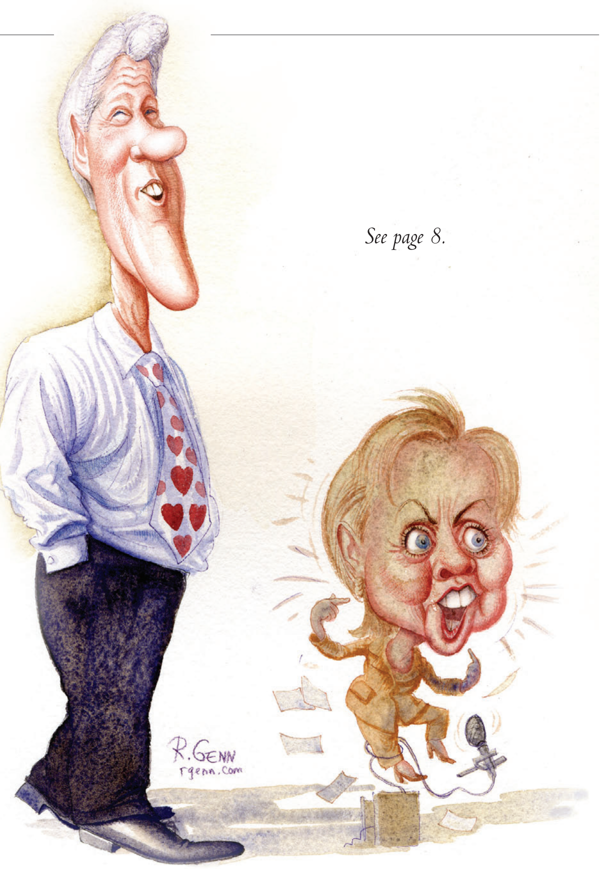
The Week

■ New left-wing slogan: Dissent is the highest form of tastelessness.

■ Congressmen's town-hall meetings on the president's health-care plan have caused a backlash of un-American fury. It comes from liberals, outraged that anyone could oppose President Obama's intention to hog-tie one-sixth of the economy. We have decided that it is good for you; how could you disagree? National health-care plans may impart a patina of security and egalitarianism. In practice, they degrade care, impose red tape and crushing expense, and habituate the public to the national teat. Ordinary Americans, conservative and otherwise, are right to be suspicious of such plans; the chaos of Obama's implementation—doorstop-sized bills that no one has read—gives them additional reason. So there is heckling. Are congressmen nobility, only to be approached at levees? As in any mass movement, there are instances of the tasteless and the pernicious. Criticize them, but don't imply that they characterize the thousands expressing their concerns, or threatening to vote out Blue Dogs, or blue-state mainstays, in November 2010.

■ Nancy Pelosi started it. The speaker of the House accused opponents of Obama's health-care plan of "carrying swastikas and symbols like that" to town-hall meetings. One unhappy sign indeed declared "No to Fascism"; another showed a circle and slash over a swastika, equating Obamacare with totalitarianism. But Pelosi implied that the protesters were pro-Nazi. So Rush Limbaugh rang the changes on her, asking where the resemblance really lies. He recited the Nazis' array of goo-goo welfare programs and said that the health-care plan's caduceus rather looks like a Nuremberg rally prop. Nazism was national socialism, and there is a choked-throat seriousness to many of Obama's gestures—*vero possumus*, the mile-long unblinking gaze—that would be annoying if they were not risible. But the Nazis' main legacy to mankind was enslaving their neighbors and murdering Jews, and no one in America outside the bughouse wants that. In the contest to be like Hitler, Republicans and Democrats both lose.

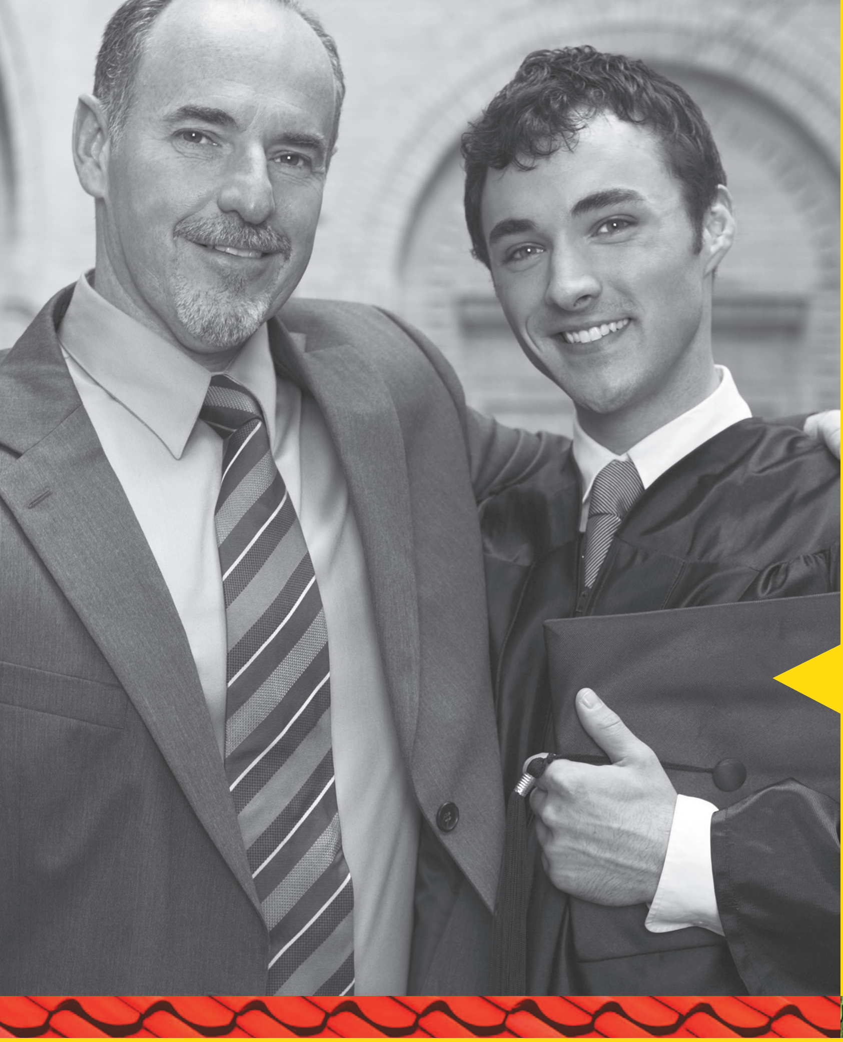
■ One bystander at a town hall has received special attention. William Kostric was outside Barack Obama's town-hall meeting in Portsmouth, N.H., wearing a pistol in a holster. New Hampshire has open-carry laws, and Kostric was in no way disorderly. What should cause alarm was the sign he carried: "It is time to water the tree of liberty." This invokes Jefferson's 1787 letter on Shays' Rebellion, an uprising of indebted farmers in Massachusetts. "What signify a few lives lost in a century or two?" Jefferson, thousands of miles away in Paris, asked. "The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time, with the blood of patriots and tyrants." Jefferson was a great man, but some of his thoughts were greatly mistaken. In the Declaration of Independence, he more reasonably observed, "Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes." But the sign bearer has taken it upon himself to nudge theory toward action. If "it is time" to water the tree of liberty, then "it is time" to kill people. For a citizen of a free country, with a free press, a right to assemble, and free elections, to say such things is dangerous madness. It is time for the half-educated to take a deep breath.



See page 8.

ROMAN GENN

■ Democrats launched nasty campaigns against Republican Supreme Court nominees in 1987 and 1991. Republican senators, seeking a respite, voted for President Clinton's nominees in 1993 and 1994. The pattern of cheek-turning continued into the early part of this decade, when President Bush renominated some of Clinton's unconfirmed lower-court nominees. These courtesies were not returned. Democrats filibustered several of Bush's lower-court nominees, and most of them voted against Samuel Alito's confirmation. As a senator, Barack Obama voted against even John Roberts, notwithstanding the legal establishment vouched for him with near-unanimity. The 31 Republican "no" votes on Sonia Sotomayor's confirmation to the Supreme Court suggest that the party is finally waking up to the realities of modern judicial politics. The Democrats are quite serious about packing the courts with left-wing policymakers. Republicans need to be just as serious about defending the Constitution. The nine



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"yes" votes from Republicans, meanwhile, show that some people are slow learners.

■ Being a surgeon must be great. If you want that new plasma TV, just take out a child's tonsils; for high-def, hack off somebody's foot. So President Obama seems to think, judging from comments he made at a recent press conference ("The doctor may [say], 'I make a lot more money if I take this kid's tonsils out'") and in a town-hall meeting ("If that same diabetic ends up getting their foot amputated, that's $30,000, $40,000, $50,000—immediately the surgeon is reimbursed"; in fact, a surgeon usually gets $700 to $1,000 for an amputation, and the total hospital bill would be about $10,000). Okay, perhaps we're being unfair. The president may just have gotten confused and tripped over his words; he's good at that. But his sloppiness symbolizes what's wrong with the entire health-care-reform process. Before revolutionizing a giant portion of the nation's economy and affecting the health of every citizen, shouldn't the president have some clue about how doctors work and what things cost?

Hunting Nazis

WHAT was it Al Pacino said in *Godfather III*? "Just when I thought I was out—they pull me back in."

That's sort of how I feel these days about the current fight over liberals and fascism. In case you haven't noticed, fascism talk is everywhere. Nancy Pelosi with her *Sixth Sense*–ish "I see swastikas," Rush Limbaugh fighting back, Glenn Beck pounding the table, town-hallers hauling around pictures of Obama with a Hitler mustache: These are good times to be moving a book called *Liberal Fascism*. And that leaves out the White House's asking Americans to rat out neighbors who peddle "fishy" e-mail. It overlooks the fact that Obama's science adviser, John Holdren, and one of Obama's health-care gurus, Ezekiel Emanuel, have written things that would fit nicely into my chapter on eugenics. And—oh yeah—it also leaves out that Obama has essentially nationalized much of the banking and auto industries while vowing to do his darnedest to make us more like European social democracies. The news out of this administration bolsters one argument after another in my book.

But the thing is, I've been arguing about fascism and liberalism nonstop for nearly two years now. And it is exhausting. Moreover, the glorious thing about the Obama Moment is that I can just say "look around" to those who thought I was imagining things when I first wrote the book and gave little thought to an obscure Illinois state legislator.

But there's a problem. Many folks claim to see in Obama the makings of an actual Hitler and in Obamaism a repeat of the National Socialism of the 1930s. Worse, some think my book supports their fears. And maybe it does, though I hope not.

The simple truth is that I do not think it is in the cards for America to go down a Nazi path. I never said otherwise in *Liberal Fascism*, either.

It's important to keep in mind that, as bad as various other avowedly fascist regimes were, only the Nazis did what they did. Mussolini was a bad man and a dictator, but he was no Hitler. The Italians did bad things, but they don't amount to a fraction of German crimes. Supposedly fascist Franco wasn't nearly as bad as Mussolini, and Franco's complicity in the Holocaust was nil. In other words, fascism brings out things in specific cultures at specific moments. Not only is Obama obviously not interested in being a Hitler, he couldn't pull Hitlerism out of the American people if he wanted to.

Indeed, while I don't think it is remotely right or fair to call Obama a crypto-Nazi (if by that you mean to say he's a would-be Hitler), the real problem with all of this loose Nazi talk is that it slanders the American people. Daniel Jonah Goldhagen may have overstated his case in *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, but he was certainly right that the German people were Hitler's willing enablers. The overwhelming majority of the American people—in their history, culture, bones, hearts, souls, DNA, and carbon molecules—are not like that. That goes for American liberals and leftists too. The extent and depth of liberalism's obtuseness on the subject of fascism (and much else) stews my bowels, but American liberals are still Americans, and Americans will not goose-step behind a Hitler, period.

As I make clear in *Liberal Fascism*, the obvious and pressing threat is not from a Hitlerite-Orwellian dictatorship but from a Huxleyan namby-pamby mommy state. That sort of system could seduce Americans into becoming chestless subjects of the State in exchange for bottomless self-gratification and liberation from the necessity of adult decision-making. Yes, there's a danger that such a society could then be susceptible to some darker vision that lionizes the lost manhood of a half-forgotten past. But, by that point, this would be America in name only, if even that ("U.N. District 12" has a nice ring to it).

—JONAH GOLDBERG

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■ Would the private sector be allowed to compete on even terms with Obamacare? Consult the president, who protested, “UPS and FedEx are doing just fine, right? It’s the post office that’s always having problems.” Thank you ever so much, Mr. President. Of course, what UPS and Federal Express do not do—what they are in fact expressly forbidden by law to do—is compete with the Postal Service in delivering letters and routine mail. The USPS is a government-protected monopoly, competing with it is illegal, it gouges Americans on letters to Grandma in order to subsidize junk mail for reasons of pure financial self-interest, and still it loses billions upon billions of dollars each year—to the extent that even the reliably statist *New York Times* has characterized its business operations as “General Motors territory.” And the GM comparison is apt enough, save one thing: You can buy a Honda. Or a Ford. Or a Hyundai. You can take the bus. Pay FedEx to deliver your daily mail and everybody goes to jail. And there is the blueprint for government-run health care.

■ Sens. Chris Dodd and Kent Conrad, Democrats both, again were given a sweetheart deal by friends in high places: The Senate Select Committee on Ethics, led by Democrat Barbara Boxer of California, dismissed accusations that the two committee chairmen knowingly received preferential treatment from disgraced mortgage lender Countrywide. Their VIP loans came through Countrywide’s infamous “Friends of Angelo” program, named for former CEO Angelo Mozilo, who now is facing fraud and insider-trading charges. The most the ethics panel could manage was to gently admonish the two. Their eventual awareness that their loans were being handled through a program with the name “VIP” should have “raised red flags,” it wrote to the senators. The fact that they’re getting off so lightly should raise red flags for voters.

■ Betsey Wright is in the news again. She was Bill Clinton’s chief of staff in Arkansas and a key operative in his 1992 presidential campaign. She was a tamper-down of “bimbo eruptions”: her phrase for talking by women who were supposed to keep mum. Wright is now “facing 51 felony charges of attempting to smuggle needles and knives onto Arkansas’s death row,” in the words of one report. Really. What a carnival the eight years of Clinton were.

■ Reportedly, John Edwards—the former North Carolina senator, vice-presidential nominee, and presidential candidate—has been confirmed as the father of a campaign worker’s child and is set to publicly admit paternity. Anyone of good will must wish Edwards, his long-suffering wife, the child, and her mother the peace that has eluded them for so long—and be glad that this situation did not unfold with Edwards in the White House.

■ A necessary attribute of diplomats is the poker face. After sitting through a drunken and indecent after-dinner speech by the king of England, Talleyrand said only: “*C’est bien remarquable*” (“That was certainly remarkable,” or, more idiomatically, “No comment”). Hillary Clinton should have taken a lesson from the great Frenchman. At a student Q&A during a trip to the Congo, a translator mistakenly asked her what her husband (the questioner had in fact asked about President Obama) thought of Chinese business dealings there. She snapped, “You want to know what my husband thinks? My husband is not the secretary of state, I am. So you ask my opinion, I will tell you my opinion. I’m not going to be channeling my husband.” What French tag would be appropriate for that wounded outburst—*ce n’est que la vérité qui blesse* (it’s only the truth that hurts)? If there was any Congolese Talleyrand in the audience, he was certainly thinking “*bien remarquable*.”

■ Our secretary of state also told political activists in blood-drenched, corruption-wracked Nigeria that she understands their plight: “As you may remember, in 2000 our presidential election came down to one state where the brother of one of the men running for president was governor of the state. So we have our problems too.” Given our current administration’s top priorities—apologizing for America’s existence and blaming everything on its predecessor—it would perhaps have been too much to expect Secretary Clinton to pass up a twofer like that. What’s most offensive about her remark is how patronizing it was: She might as well have gone to a battered-women’s shelter and said, “Yeah, my husband’s a real piece of work too.” One of the few highlights of Barack Obama’s presidency has been his tough-talking speech on Africa’s problems and the pressing need for accountability and freedom. Frivolous ad-libs like Clinton’s undercut that message.

■ Attorney General Eric Holder may soon name a prosecutor to investigate CIA interrogators. Earlier, President Obama had appeared to immunize the interrogators, acknowledging the unfairness of harassing agents who followed Justice Department guidance. But that comment opened the door to investigating interrogators who deviated from the guidance. This exercise proceeds from a false premise: To warrant investigation, a person must violate a statute, not a DOJ memo. The relevant statute is the federal anti-torture law, which, Holder’s own Justice Department has argued in court submissions, sets a high burden of proof on prosecutors. It is not enough to show infliction of severe physical or mental pain; the government must also prove that the interrogator specifically intended to torture. Waterboarding—as administered by the CIA under DOJ guidance, for the purpose of saving lives—does not meet the standard. When there is no case, an ethical prosecutor does not investigate.

■ The Left’s main complaint about the stimulus was that it was too small. Looking overseas, Paul Krugman and economists of his stripe contended that stimulus packages in Germany, France, and other major economies also were too small. The United States spent 2 percent of GDP, while Germany, whose export-driven economy had taken a much harder hit, spent only 1.5 percent. France spent even less. It is true that “automatic stabilizers”—countercyclical features of the Euro-welfare state—complicate the picture a little, but even accounting for those, the Europeans spent less in response to more radical contractions. If the neo-Keynesians were not

JOHN DURICKA/AP

VOL. CLVIII....No. 35

Natural Science News

"For Your Health"

Breaking Research News

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Top Harvard researcher says it's "the Holy Grail of aging research."*

…as seen on CBS "60 Minutes"

Don't wait for the drug companies to drive the price through the roof; get the benefits of this breakthrough *natural* extract for pennies a day!

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*These statements have not been evaluated by the FDA. This product is not meant to diagnose or treat any disease. Vinotrol is not endorsed, associated or affiliated in any way with Harvard University, Johns Hopkins, Salk Institute or UC Davis Medical. * CBS News, Nov 1, 2006* immune to evidence, they might find it persuasive that Germany and France have shown unexpected growth and have exited the global recession, in spite of their allegedly anemic emergency measures. Also on the rebound: China, Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, and Japan. Our idea for a stimulus would have been much cheaper: Export Paul Krugman.

■ Speaking from Martha's Vineyard (civic motto: "Begone, peasant!"), Obama-administration "pay czar" Kenneth Feinberg has announced that he will be reviewing, with a gimlet eye, the paychecks handed out to workers at Citigroup, Goldman Sachs, and other financial institutions. A sort of fiduciary time traveler—think of *Timecop* in the boardroom—Czar Kenneth stands ready to challenge both future compensation and past compensation, and invokes "clawback" provisions that empower him to demand the return of money that already has been paid to financial-sector employees. *Alles klar, Herr Kommissar?* "Anything is possible under the law," he says. If so, the law should be changed.

■ Annually, thousands of Americans defend themselves with guns. Usually these incidents are nonviolent—the victim draws a weapon, the criminal runs away—but sometimes they end in bloodshed. Such was the case recently in Harlem: With the aid of a shotgun, 72-year-old store owner Charles Augusto Jr. fended off a group of robbers, killing two and injuring two more. Apparently thinking this experience insufficiently traumatic, officials considered a misdemeanor weapons charge against Augusto because he did not have a permit for the gun (the NYPD informs us the case is "still under investigation"). We do not endorse illegal gun ownership, but perhaps Augusto lacked a permit because the process for acquiring one in New York City is so burdensome: It costs about $240 just to apply and be fingerprinted for a rifle/shotgun permit, $440 for a handgun permit. In this case, the good guy prevailed, but with no help from his government.

■ What, if anything, should be done about global warming is a knotty issue. Among those equipped to analyze the relevant information, there is no agreement. Common sense suggests that large political projects to deal with the issue, if there is an issue, be deferred until we have better understanding. That would leave politicians with little to do, however—an intolerable state of affairs for some politicians, who would persuade us that action must be taken with no time for thought. Hence Debbie Stabenow, junior U.S. senator from Michigan, telling us that "climate change is very real. . . . I feel it when I'm flying. The storms are more volatile." Hence also U.N. secretary general Ban Ki-moon at a Global Environment Forum in his native Korea, urging the world's great and good to come to agreement before the next big climate-change junket in December: "We have just four months . . . to secure the future of our planet." So after December the whole tiresome business will become moot, and we can stop bothering about it? If only!

J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP

■ Former president Bill Clinton made a trip to North Korea to secure the release of Laura Ling and Euna Lee, two American journalists imprisoned there since March. The North Koreans claimed they were spies and sentenced them to twelve years' hard labor. The real purpose, however, was not punishment, but the extortion of a diplomatic demarche of the kind North Korea subsequently got. The Obama administration has stressed that Clinton's trip was purely humanitarian, but the North Koreans view Clinton as a channel for direct negotiations with the United States, which would enhance the regime's prestige, and perhaps allow it to cut side deals with neighbors anxious about being left out. Clinton's mere presence, splashed over the world's media and slathered over North Korea's, is a first installment of that goal. The lesson for North Korea is clear: Rewards come to those who do ill.

■ Lots of good people hold up British socialized medicine as the example to follow, but that is not the view of Daniel Hannan. An up-and-coming conservative and a member of the European parliament in Brussels, he allows himself the pleasure of saying what he thinks. His recent demolition of Prime Minister Gordon Brown in a speech of just three minutes won him instant international fame. On the Sean Hannity show, he has taken apart another feature of the British landscape, the National Health Service, a sacred cow farther beyond critique than the monarchy. In Hannan's view, the NHS is a relic from another age, like the system they have in Cuba or North Korea, and it's almost impossible to get rid of, despite its huge waiting lists, bad survival rates, and placement of life-and-death decisions in the hands of state bureaucracy. Brown and other socialists are accusing Hannan of being nasty and unpatriotic, no less, and they have been issuing the equivalent of fatwas, while Tory leader David Cameron disowned his colleague Hannan as "eccentric." Speaking the truth is indeed an eccentricity in Cameron's party these days, which is why third parties are increasingly winning conservative votes.

■ The lights keep going off in Venezuela. Independent media outlets are being shut down. Hugo Chávez has not yet achieved Castroite darkness—but he is bidding fair. Now he has turned his ire and power on golf, closing some of the country's courses, and denouncing the sport in general. He called golf "bourgeois," that asinine pejorative of the Marxists. And he said, "I respect all sports—but there are sports and there are sports. Do you mean to tell me this is a people's sport? It is not." Not that he would care, but many poor people have risen in golf—a backwoodsman like Sam Snead; a barrio kid like Chi Chi Rodriguez. But even if this were not true—so what? Golf is part of freedom, which is increasingly not part of Venezuela. It's easy to make light of the issue. At Foggy Bottom, our spokesman P. J. Crowley joked that Chávez was "out of bounds." Other people's loss of freedom is so amusing.

■ So the president decided that health-care costs were too high and boldly implemented measures to curb them. Step 1: Close down rural hospitals and clinics—if they really need health care, the peasants can travel to the cities. Step 2: Replace 15,000 doctors with totally unqualified army conscripts—no need to mollycoddle every wailing baby with a team of expensively educated MDs. Step 3: To improve health statistics, forbid the reporting of hepatitis and other infectious diseases. There's no denying that Saparmurat Niyazov, the late president-for-life of Turkmenistan, was a visionary when it came to nationalized health care, albeit a barking-mad one. Clamping down on costs, rationing care, chasing doctors out of the profession, bringing political pressure to bear on medical practices: Niyazovcare isn't the twin sister of Obamacare, but it is an unruly third cousin, one currently enduring an outbreak of the bubonic plague.

■ John Mackey is co-founder and CEO of Whole Foods Market Inc., the nation's largest retailer of organic foods. All kinds of people buy Whole Foods products, of course, but leftish, Obama-voting, bourgeois-bohemian types predominate. There was therefore great consternation and anger among Whole Foods customers when the *Wall Street Journal* published an op-ed piece by John Mackey opposing the Democrats' health-care reform plan. The plan is, wrote Mackey, wrongheaded and unaffordable. He suggested some sensible alternatives. The Internet was soon ringing with peals of outrage from elements of the nutburger brigades vowing never to shop at Whole Foods again. Perhaps they should have paid attention a week earlier when, under the headline "As Sales Slip, Whole Foods Tries Health Push," the *Journal* reported Mr. Mackey's saying, "We sell a bunch of junk" and vowing that the firm would henceforth "take a leadership role in educating people about a healthy diet." Let's see: Mackey's admission that Whole Foods has just been *pretending* to sell healthy food to yuppies caused not a ripple in the customer base; Mackey's opposing the administration's health-care spend-o-rama has them up in arms. Progressives are even stranger than you think.

■ The Human Space Flight Plans Committee, a ten-person panel appointed by President Obama to work out a future strategy for NASA, has met with administration officials prior to its final report at the end of August. The committee's deliberations, widely leaked, do not bode well for NASA and its contractors. The space shuttle will be retired next year, leaving the U.S. with no way to put human beings in space. The shuttle's replacement will enter service around 2016—just as the International Space Station, a political extravaganza of no scientific value, is likely to be crashed into the Pacific Ocean. Striving to come up with manned missions we can actually afford, the panel may recommend a visit to one of the Lagrange points. These are locations in empty space, on the moon's orbital path, where physics predicts a gravitational "plateau." Some fragmentary loose matter may have settled there: interplanetary dust bunnies. This would not be NASA's most exciting mission; but it's just as far as the moon, without the expensive necessity to land on anything. Such are our current ambitions. What a falling-off was there!

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■ Yale University Press—after the usual vetting process, which drew rave reviews from prominent Muslims—agreed to publish Brandeis professor Jytte Klausen's book *The Cartoons That Shook the World*, about the Danish caricatures of Mohammed that triggered global Islamist mayhem. Before publication, however, Klausen was advised by YUP and top university administrators that the actual cartoons, the raison d'être for the book, could not be published. What's more, Yale extended its ban to all representations of the Prophet, including Gustave Doré's famous illustration of an episode from Dante's *Inferno*. Yale claimed to have consulted an extraordinary panel of two dozen experts who, an official told the *New York Times*, "unanimously" recommended against publication. But one of the experts consulted has already gone public, explaining that she vehemently opposed the purge. One is left to wonder how far this defensive compliance with sharia law, which prohibits depictions of Mohammed, will go. Roger Kimball of *The New Criterion* fears for Adolph Weinman's representation of the Prophet holding a sword, currently in bas-relief at the United States Supreme Court.

■ The Social Security Administration has published its lists of the most popular baby names in 2008. For boys, Jacob was No. 1 for the tenth consecutive year, having broken Michael's 38-year reign back in 1999. Emily, after twelve years at No. 1 for girls, was unseated by Emma, which seems hardly to have been worth the trouble. But who's this rocketing up from No. 12,535 to No. 2,409 in a single year? Why, it's Barack. That ten-thousand-plus advance is the biggest on record. The SSA predicts that Barack will enter the top 1,000 boys' names this year. Possibly so; but our own suspicion is that Barack may have peaked last year.

■ Forty years ago, 300,000 kids or more converged on a dairy farm in upstate New York for a weekend of rock and roll. Woodstock became myth even as it happened. James Burnham, writing about it for NR, compared it to an orgiastic rite from ancient mystery religions. The devotees of such cults felt inspired, in communication with a god. They could also (see Euripides' *Bacchae*) be torn apart. So there were a lot of great riffs and shout-outs, as well as a lot of hunger, thirst, dirt, infection, and exploitation. (Who passed out the bad drugs? Bad druggies.) And how, all the mornings after, do you keep the feeling going? The long answer was, more music, more drugs, and more sex. The short answer is, you don't.

■ Michael Vick, the hotshot quarterback who spent a year and a half in prison for running an illegal dog-fighting ring, has been hired by the Philadelphia Eagles. The NFL will allow him to practice with the team, and will review his suspension from the league in October. PETA has criticized Vick's reprieve, and indeed he ran a sadistic operation that beat, drowned, and electrocuted dogs, in addition to pitting them against each other in combat. But he was tried and convicted, and served his penalty. Under the aegis of the Humane Society he talks to kids about treating animals well. A change for Michael Vick's career, or a change of heart? Time will tell, but he deserves the chance to prove it is the latter.

HENRY GRIFFIN/AP

■ Robert Novak was a figure of the telephone/shoe-leather/source-lunch era. For decades he worked his political beat, tirelessly pursuing stories, leads, trends. In 1968 he noted the volatility of the white working class, sometimes for Bobby Kennedy, sometimes for George Wallace. Four decades later, he was a key figure in the Plame affair. Novak was an ardent supply-sider, boosting the theory and its champions, Ronald Reagan and Jack Kemp, seeing it and them as a way for the GOP to regain the blue-collar cred it had not had since William McKinley (it was typical of Novak to know what the blue-collar vote thought of William McKinley). At the dawn of the Terror War, he fell into dismaying misjudgments: 9/11, he wrote, was not as bad as Pearl Harbor, since the Japanese and their German allies sought to control the world while al-Qaeda really only hated Israel. Tell that to Cantor Fitzgerald and Flight 93. Younger journalists should hope to work so hard, and to have as high a batting average. Dead at 78. R.I.P.

■ Rather than leave students free to choose, the professor of Economics 301 at the University of Chicago assigned seating by alphabet. That put Rose Director and Milton Friedman next to each other. They married in 1938, forming one of the 20th century's most important intellectual and personal partnerships. As a free-market economist, Milton earned scholarly respect and popular fame. Rose was his constant collaborator, especially on books and columns that involved questions of public policy. Friends regarded her as a bit more practical—and a bit more conservative—than her libertarian husband. Pres. George W. Bush once joked that she was the only person known to have won an argument with him. Until Milton's death in 2006, they were almost inseparable, often seen holding hands in public, as if their 1930s romance had never ended. Rose Friedman died as this issue was going to press, age 98. R.I.P.

■ Eunice Kennedy Shriver was a rare person, a member of a prominent political family who made her own, highly individual mark on society. In founding the Special Olympics and in her other activism, she helped bring disabled Americans to fuller participation in our national life. Her advocacy for the mentally retarded was of a piece with her broader commitment to the defense of human life, a cause in which she was passionate. For her Democratic party, she represents, sadly, the Road Not Taken. For everyone, she stands as an example of the civilization of love. Dead at 88. R.I.P.

■ Budd Schulberg was a Hollywood brat, a Dartmouth man, a novelist (*What Makes Sammy Run?*), a screenwriter (*On the Waterfront*, *A Face in the Crowd*), a journalist, a matchless boxing writer, and an OSS officer in World War II. His writing was characterized by its brutal honesty, but his most honest moment was his testimony before the House Un-American Affairs Committee in 1951. Schulberg had been a member of the Communist party in the 1930s, before quitting when they tried to tell him what to write; in his testimony, he named fellow members and explained what he knew of the party's insidious workings. Schulberg said later that he decided to testify after learning how many of the writers he had met on a 1934 trip to Russia were subsequently murdered by Stalin. From then on, he was an implacable foe of bullies and demagogues, whether in politics, labor, or business. Dead at 95. R.I.P.

■ Les Paul never became quite as famous as the musicians who play his guitars—a group that has included Eric Clapton, Ace Frehley, Jimmy Page, and Slash—but make no mistake about it: The man was an American innovator. After rising to prominence as a jazz guitarist in the '30s and '40s, he helped pioneer the electric solid-body guitar and several recording techniques. His inventions dramatically altered the landscape of popular music, and will continue to do so in his absence. Dead at 94. R.I.P.

HEALTH CARE

Adverse Reactions

ACCORDING to the *Washington Post*, President Obama "is reportedly frustrated that his message hasn't broken through." Maybe that's because so many of his messages cancel each other out, as when his budget director promises to find hundreds of billions of dollars in savings from Medicare while the president claims that no benefits will be cut. Or maybe it's because his messages keep hitting the brick wall of reality. The Congressional Budget Office, run by Democrats since 2007, has repeatedly called into question Obama's premises. Most recently it has found that increased funding for preventive care will not reduce health spending.

The Democrats' health-care legislation is enormously expensive at a time when government spending is already at record levels. It raises taxes on employment at the beginning of a halting economic recovery. It threatens the quality of care. If it goes through, the only way the government will be able to stay solvent is to raise middle-class taxes, deny treatments to those who want them, control prices, or suppress innovation—and probably some combination of all of the above. It threatens freedom, too. There is no end to the mischief that federal responsibility for individuals' health can license.

Even if the Democrats drop the government-run insurance program from their bills, a step the Obama administration keeps hinting it would accept, the reform would still lead to higher spending, higher taxes, less innovation, and more rationing. The government should not run an insurance program, which would put us on a fast track toward national health care—and opponents of Obamacare should be alert to the possibility that disguised versions of the program remain in the bill. But we should not take the slow track to national health care, either.

The bills contain an "individual mandate": a requirement that everyone buy insurance that meets the government's standards. The only defensible rationale for this requirement is that people who lack insurance raise everyone else's premiums when they get emergency-room care. But the best estimates are that this effect is small, and we have reason to think that the costs of a mandate would be high. The states have given us a preview of what would happen. Health-care lobbyists have gotten state governments to require that their services be included in any insurance policy, driving premiums up and up. Will the lobbyists' zeal diminish when they have one place to go, and the product is mandatory for all Americans?

Instead of forcing people to buy insurance policies they do not want, the government should make it easier to offer people policies they do. Allow them to opt out of their states' regulations by letting them buy insurance across state lines, and let them do so without paying a tax penalty for buying it themselves rather than through their employer. We cannot cut costs by expanding coverage, but we may be able to expand coverage by cutting costs.

Liberals are having one of their periodic fits of rage, blaming their political difficulties on the madness of the Right and the ignorance of the public. There is, of course, never enough civility to go around. We wish that no conservatives had ever tried to drown out a congressman at a town-hall meeting. We also wish Senate majority leader Harry Reid would not call Obamacare's opponents "evil-mongers." (Speaker Nancy Pelosi combined incivility with ingratitude when she called the insurers, who back most of Obamacare, "villains.") But the legislation is worth getting worked up over. If liberals were out in force, it would be called "righteous indignation."

The Democrats may be at the start of a retreat on health care; let it be a long one.

J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP

ROMAN GENN

Direction, Anyone?

What the GOP needs is not a leader, but political entrepreneurs

BY RAMESH PONNURU

REPUBLICANS are looking for a leader. Go to any right-leaning gathering, and at some point the conversation will turn to the party's potential presidential nominee in 2012. Republicans were less consumed by that question in 1993, the first year of the last Democratic presidency. Even when Republicans aren't talking about the 2012 race, they are debating who speaks for the party—sometimes explicitly, as when Rush Limbaugh and Michael Steele feuded this spring. Or they are wondering who will form the next generation of Republican leaders: Eric Cantor? Paul Ryan?

The present-day question can be answered simply: The Republican party has no leader. Nobody should be surprised by this fact. A party without the White House and without either chamber of Congress is unlikely to generate an unquestioned leader. To the extent Newt Gingrich overcame those odds in 1993–94, it was because of highly unusual circumstances. He had led the fight against the previous Republican president's tax increase in 1990, that president had lost his reelection campaign, and the party had concluded both that the tax increase was the most important mistake that had led to the defeat and that it was connected to all the other mistakes.

Ronald Reagan was to some extent the leader of the party after Gerald Ford's 1976 defeat, although we tend to forget how tough a primary campaign Reagan had to fight in 1980. But he would not have earned that status if he had not challenged Ford in a two-man primary and Ford had not then lost the general election.

The present circumstance offers no parallel to either previous set of wilderness years for the Republicans. Nobody ran against Bush in the 2004 primaries, he was reelected, and no single piece of legislation became the organizing principle for an intra-party opposition that ultimately saw its interpretation of events adopted by the party as a whole. Nor did any Republican go mano-a-mano against McCain in 2008.

The search for a leader of the party is therefore destined to be fruitless. The party will not have a leader until it has a presidential nominee or has taken control of a chamber of Congress. The good news is that the party doesn't really need leadership. The bad news is that it also doesn't have what it does need: entrepreneurship.

The situation was quite different in the late 1970s. In today's highly structured, hierarchical GOP it is hard to believe that a congressman who wasn't in the party's leadership, and wasn't even on the House Ways and Means Committee, could become its chief spokesman on economic policy. Yet Jack Kemp came to fill that role even while rejecting many of the party's existing economic tenets—and even though most of the supply-siders around him lacked formal credentials as economists.

Even as late as 1993, the party did not put too much stock in its titular leadership. Bob Michel was, officially, the House minority leader and Bob Dole his Senate counterpart. But it was of course Gingrich who truly led the House Republicans, and such senators as Phil Gramm and Paul Coverdell did more to defeat the Clinton administration's health-care plan than Dole.

The current congressional leaders—Mitch McConnell in the Senate, John Boehner in the House—are more aggressive, and probably more capable, than Dole and Michel. Partly as a result, though, backbench Republicans take fewer actions independent of their leaders. Not much seems to happen among House Republicans, for example, that hasn't been coordinated with Boehner's staff.

So Republicans have a high degree of unity these days, which has been very helpful in opposing liberal initiatives such

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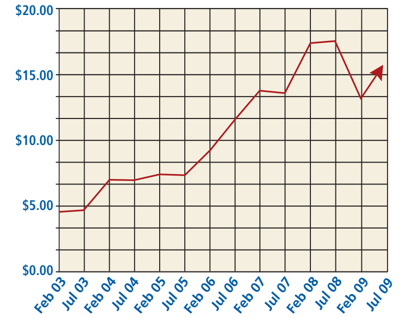

Silver Trend Chart: Prices based on monthly averages. ©AMS, 2009.

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as the stimulus and the Democrats' health-care legislation. The downside of that unity is that it is less helpful in generating new ideas, some of which the party will probably need to retake power and will certainly need to exercise it productively. Understandably given their role, the leaders will not embrace an idea unless it has the support of the vast bulk of their followers, or at least does not offend them or compete with their own ideas. But no new idea can pass that test until it gets a thorough airing. Backbenchers can promote those ideas—but only if they are not waiting for someone else to give them direction or, worse, a script.

So opportunities for entrepreneurship abound, unseized. There is no shortage of potentially popular conservative causes. But where is the backbench congressman who will devote himself to publicizing our elite universities' shameful treatment of ROTC programs? Who has the moxie to try to revolutionize the party's economic platform by offering a pro-family tax reform? What congressman was willing not only to oppose the bailout of Detroit but to advocate that our carmakers instead be released from fuel-economy regulations? Republicans have pounced on the many signs that the Obama administration is distancing itself from Israel. But one could make the case that it has systematically been devaluing our alliances, including our old ones with Britain and Japan and our new one with India. Will anyone make that case?

Among the possible explanations for the decline in entrepreneurship, four stand out. The first has to do with the general tendency of a party to fall in line behind a president who belongs to it. For eight years, the congressional party's agenda was whatever President Bush said it was. That wasn't the case in 1993, since a lot of congressmen had stopped identifying with the first President Bush even before he left office; and it wasn't the case in the late 1970s, since the long-out-of-power congressional GOP had no agenda and wasn't expected to have one. This time there is a habit that has to be unlearnt.

The second is that changes in the way campaigns are financed have changed the psychology of politicians. It has often been observed that Reagan's campaign for governor of California in 1966, and Eugene McCarthy's for president in 1968, would have been impossible under the current campaign-finance laws. A small number of rich people who believed passionately in something had the power to shake up politics; perhaps that ability has been sacrificed to a spurious equality.

The increasing sophistication of gerrymandering may also be partly to blame. (That's my third culprit, if you're counting.) In conversation, Bill Kristol recently described Republican congressmen as exhibiting "a curious mix of dogmatism and timidity." The districts most of them represent encourage both traits. They are packed with conservatives, thus simultaneously reducing conservatives' influence in other districts and relieving the congressmen of any need to learn how to appeal to non-conservatives in order to win and keep their seats. This latter effect could be expected to yield a certain lockstep conformity rather than creativity.

Conservatives have generally resisted the idea of letting nonpartisan commissions draw district lines according to some formula, thinking it a close cousin to campaign-finance regulation and, even more, fearing that it would reduce the number of hard-core conservative congressmen. There are limits to what such a reform could achieve, given that liberals and conservatives over the last generation have tended to move to different neighborhoods and states. But perhaps conservatives should rethink their position on the policy question.

On the other hand, the Republican governors, who provided the party with many of its most successful policy initiatives in the 1990s, do not seem to be brimming with ideas either, with a few exceptions. Gerrymandering cannot explain their passivity.

A final possibility is that the supply of entrepreneurship has fallen because the demand has. Most conservatives have concluded that Republicans fell from power because they fell from grace. Rightworld these days places a considerably higher priority on the maintenance of principles than on finding new ways to apply them. The example of the reigning Democrats, who regained power without coming up with any new ideas, strengthens this inclination.

So we have come to this sorry pass: The party that gives political expression to America's entrepreneurial class has within its number few political entrepreneurs. What Republicans celebrate they do not, alas, exemplify. **NR**

Blue Dog Blues

Nancy Pelosi and the House's moderate Democrats are making life tough for each other

BY STEPHEN SPRUIELL

Honesdale, Pa.

IF you want to understand better why President Obama's heath-care agenda has foundered, consider the story of Rep. Christopher Carney, a Democrat who represents the district that includes this northeastern Pennsylvania town. Political prognosticators considered the Penn State professor an underdog when he decided to run in 2006 against incumbent Republican Don Sherwood, but his campaign got an unexpected boost when Sherwood's mistress came forward and accused him of choking her. Carney took a right-leaning position on nearly every issue except for the war in Iraq and became the first Democrat in nearly 50 years to be elected in Pennsylvania's Tenth.

Carney is the kind of Democrat who helped the party recapture Congress that year and build on its lead in 2008. The blue-collar, socially conservative, pro-military voters in his district were disgusted by Republican scandals and dissatisfied with Republicans' handling of the war. In order to win (and keep) their votes, Carney has broken with his party on a number of issues. He is a member of the Blue Dog coalition, which has recently gained notoriety for nipping at Speaker Nancy Pelosi's heels as she tries to ram the party's ambitious health-care bill through the House. The Blue Dogs are the reason Pelosi was not able to pass a bill before the August recess, setting the stage for a month of contentious town-hall meetings that have moved public opinion against the legislation.

Carney held one such meeting here at the Wayne County Courthouse on an uncomfortably hot morning in the middle of August. The estimated 300-plus turnout exemplified the level of interest this debate has generated. Voters packed a steamy second-floor courtroom to ask Carney questions on topics ranging from

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the bill's overall cost to its inclusion of taxpayer funding for abortions. Dozens more milled about outside, conversing with reporters and one another on the sprawling courthouse square. A majority of the attendees voiced a desire for some sort of health-care reform, but most were also critical of various aspects of the Democrats' bill.

Even constituents who disagreed with Carney gave him credit for slowing down the bill. Barbara Yanchek, a resident of Jermyn, Pa., who attended the town-hall meeting, says, "I'm glad he was one of the Blue Dogs who stopped it, but there are so many changes that need to be made to this bill, honestly, they might need to scrap it." Herein lies the Blue Dogs' dilemma: When they get back to Congress in September, they will still have to vote for a very bad piece of legislation. "If he votes against it, he'll find support in this district," Yanchek says, "but not from his own party."

The Blue Dogs were formed in 1995 as a group of conservative Democrats who blamed the party's losses on its lack of fiscal discipline. The 2006 and 2008 elections contributed to the group's importance by adding 19 lawmakers to its membership, bringing the total to 52. They call themselves "Blue Dogs" because their position between the Republicans and the left wing of their own party leaves them squeezed until they turn blue—and because one of the group's founders, Louisiana congressman Billy Tauzin, was fond of paintings of blue hounds. (Tauzin, who later switched parties, is ironically now the CEO of the nation's largest pharmaceutical lobby, PhRMA, which is spending heavily to support the Democrats' plan.)

ROMAN GENN

Many Blue Dogs infuriated liberals with their votes on the 2007 Iraq War supplemental, which provided the funds for the surge, and the 2007 and 2008 Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act modernizations, which protected from lawsuits the telecommunications companies that had cooperated with the Bush administration's terrorist-surveillance programs. These votes led left-wing bloggers to rename them "Bush Dogs," and liberal officeholders are no less scornful. Most Blue Dogs went along with the party's budget-busting stimulus bill, and enough of them voted for Rep. Henry Waxman's energy-rationing climate-change bill to secure its passage. But their stalling tactics on health care have set a number of prominent Democrats to whining about their influence in the party.

Rep. Maxine Waters, the liberal lawmaker from California, said that Rahm Emanuel's "chickens have come home to roost," because Emanuel, when he was chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, recruited conservative Democrats to run in right-leaning districts. And former DNC head Howard Dean has warned of primary challenges for Blue Dogs who won't support a government-run insurance plan as part of the overall reform. But the most petulant voice belonged to Waxman. After the Blue Dogs on the House Energy and Commerce Committee refused to vote the bill out of committee unless he addressed their concerns, Waxman accused them of trying to "eviscerate" the bill and said, "I won't allow them to hand over control of our committee to Republicans."

A few days later, Waxman backtracked and struck a deal with the Blue Dogs, making concessions such as: an agreement that any government-run insurance plan would have to negotiate rates with health-care providers rather than use the Medicare fee schedule, putting the "public option" on a more even footing with private plans; a decrease in the amount of subsidies that the government would provide for the purchase of private health insurance; and an exemption for businesses with payrolls under $500,000 from the mandate requiring all employers to either offer insurance coverage or pay higher taxes.

But the most important concession the Blue Dogs won was time. Rep. Mike Ross of Arkansas, who leads the Blue Dogs' health-care task force, told the *Washington Post*, "We were able to reach an agreement that ensures that every member of Congress will have the entire month of August and the first week in September to read the bill and to visit with their constituents about it."

The more cynical view is that the Blue Dogs' motive for stalling had nothing to do with listening to their constituents' concerns and everything to do with preventing a repeat of the climate-change vote. In June, Pelosi forced them to vote for a very liberal piece of legislation, the Waxman-Markey bill, which now appears to be dead in the Senate. The Blue Dogs want to proceed more cautiously this time. They want to see the contours of what is possible in the Senate before they vote for another one of Pelosi's creations.

Thus, Pelosi's bullying has come back to haunt her. If she had been able to pass a health-care bill before the August recess, Senate Democrats would have had something substantial to work with in September. They could have given up very little and still claimed to have cut a lot of objectionable provisions from the House bill. Instead, the House bill is still in play, and the protests of August have moved the mercury of public opinion against the Democrats' most audacious plans. Several polls have indicated that voters are more sympathetic to the protesters now than they were before, and that they would prefer no health-care bill to the one the Democrats want to pass.

Because most of their districts are conservative, it hasn't been an easy month for Blue Dogs, and the protests at the town halls have caused some of them to lose their cool. Rep. Baron Hill of Indiana, the Blue Dogs' co-chair for policy, recently used the phrase "political terrorists" to describe the protesters. Carney hasn't used this kind of inflammatory language, though in interviews he has called some groups "obstructive and chaotic."

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at Carney's town-hall meeting here takes the form of a small pavilion erected by the people from Health Care for America Now, a group that supports Obama's agenda. The people I talk to who oppose the Democrats' plan say they don't belong to any organized group. One of them, Mary Ann Haas of Scranton, lauds Carney for his willingness to meet with constituents, even though she opposes the Democrats' health-care bill. "Sen. Robert Casey has not had one town-hall meeting," she says. "[Sen. Arlen] Specter at least had the courage to face people and explain himself, and Carney has done the same." Her main complaint is that Carney dodged the question of how he would vote if the bill came to the House floor today.

That's going to be a tough call for any Blue Dog to make. While some have said they won't support the bill even with the compromises won in the Energy and Commerce Committee, others appear ready to support what is still a terrible piece of legislation in watered-down form. For conservatives, it is a familiar story. When Sens. Olympia Snowe, Susan Collins, and then-Republican Arlen Specter voted with the Democrats on the stimulus package, the spending cuts they won were insignificant and served no purpose other than to provide them with political cover.

It wasn't enough cover, however, to save Specter from a primary challenge that scared him into switching parties. Most Blue Dogs are probably safe from this kind of primary threat—running to Carney's left won't work in this district—but they are vulnerable to challenges from the right. Carney won reelection in 2008, but he benefited from the same dynamic that helped a lot of Blue Dogs—he didn't have to take many tough votes during his first term because, with a Republican in the White House, many of the Left's domestic priorities were not on the table.

That's not the case this time, and Blue Dogs are feeling the squeeze as the likes of Pelosi and Waxman force them to take one tough vote after another. Their revolt is probably temporary—liberals like to say that a Blue Dog is just a dog that's holding its breath until it gets more pork—but even if they cave in the end, they've done conservatives a favor: They've kept the House bill in play, slowed the Democrats' momentum, and given opponents of the slow march to socialized medicine more time to make their case. **NR**

Stuck There In the Middle

For better and for worse, Max Baucus is driving the health-care agenda

BY TRAVIS KAVULLA

If Congress does not pass a health-care bill with a public option, the credit (from others, the blame) will fall on the shoulders of one of America's most powerful backroom dealers: Sen. Max Baucus, a Montana Democrat.

A nondescript 67-year-old who has spent the majority of his life in Congress, Baucus is the Finance Committee chairman and the Senate gatekeeper for health-care and climate-change legislation, as well as pretty much any spending bill the Obama administration thrusts before Congress. Baucus categorically declared earlier this year that single-payer health care "is not going to work in this country." Since then, he has changed his tone but not his bottom line; in appearances in Washington and at home, Baucus repeats like a mantra the assertion that single-payer "doesn't have 60 votes in the Senate."

That is an odd and infuriating claim to some Democrats, and the progressive blogs DailyKos and the Huffington Post have made Baucus their intra-party punching bag. They point out that 60 is the number of seats Democrats effectively hold in the Senate. So just how, they want to know, is Obama's vision for health care a no-go?

Instead of single-payer, all of the health-care bills reported out of committees have a "public option," a government-run insurance plan—like Medicare with universal eligibility. Sen. Chris Dodd (D., Conn.) the acting chairman of Ted Kennedy's Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, strongly supports a public option and has suggested that Baucus might find himself out of his chairmanship if Democrats feel sold short by his negotiations.

At present, Baucus's is the sole committee to have sent legislation to the floor. It also has conducted the only truly bipartisan process in either the House or the Senate. The six-member team Baucus has convened to negotiate the key issues is evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans. Progressives are furious: Here they win an election but still are hampered by the maneuverings of Senator Baucus and five others whose states together comprise 2.77 percent of the American population. Were it not for the Baucus negotiations, moreover, health-care reform might have been a *fait accompli* by the August recess. Now, with the sleeping giant of an angry public awakened, the debates seem just to have begun.

Left-wingers can hardly be surprised. This is stuff right out of the Baucus playbook. Carving out a space at the center, at the fulcrum of power, has long been the senator's *modus operandi*. According to Montana political lore, when Baucus was a young lawyer eager to run for office, he approached the editors of his local paper, the *Missoulian*, and asked their advice on what was proving to be a tough question: Should he run for office as a Democrat or a Republican? The habit of preferring to remain on the fence has endured.

Indeed, Baucus's centrism is sometimes literal. During George W. Bush's early State of the Union speeches, Baucus made a point of taking a seat near the middle of the chamber and standing and applauding for items that drew mostly derision or indifference from his side of the aisle. Without Baucus, it is unlikely the Bush tax cuts or the Medicare prescription-drug benefit would have reached the president's desk.

Republicans in his state are convinced that Baucus's centrist image is a fiction. "He is a liberal who has convinced the press to call him a 'moderate,'" says Rob Natelson, a law professor at the University of Montana and a leading conservative voice in the state. He points to Baucus's lifetime American Conservative Union rating, which shows him on the conservative side only 14 percent of the time. To be sure, Baucus delivers procedural and filibuster votes to his party. On issues such as abortion, he has obeyed the party whip even when Harry Reid (who has a 19 percent ACU rating) has not.

Mr. Kavulla is a former associate editor of NATIONAL REVIEW.

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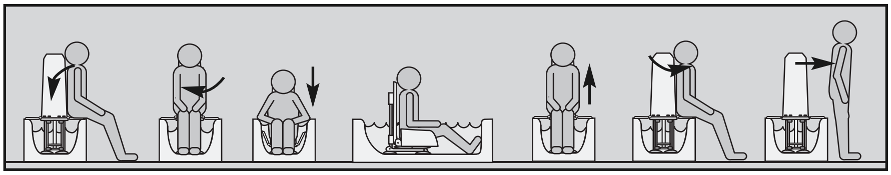

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In his last closely fought race, in 1996, Republicans tried to brand Baucus as a conservative vote only when Election Day neared—and, for the next five years, a reliable Democratic foot soldier. In one catchy ad from the campaign, titled "Max Baucus Does the Wishy-Washy" (set to the tune of "My Baby Does the Hanky-Panky"), a range of Montana's charismatic fauna—here a bear, there a wolf—shake their heads "yes" one moment, "no" the next. There was something deeply true about the superficially silly advertisement. Baucus is nothing if not a political animal, and it is his instinct to assess his right flank warily. Like other Western Democrats, he tends to his NRA rating (an A+) with an almost paranoid devotion.

Today, however, the Montana GOP is in ruins and, by habit, Baucus may be overestimating his opponents. Out of eight statewide elected officials, there is only one Republican. The resulting dearth of high-profile contenders has meant that some truly laughable opponents have faced Baucus. Last year, the GOP nominee was a former Green-party candidate who wanted to abolish the presidency and turn the United States into a parliamentary democracy. Before that, in 2002, it was a largely unknown conservative state senator who, in a past life, had apparently been a rather effeminate hair stylist. (He tearfully withdrew when the Baucus team distributed a video, ca. 1970s, showing him decked out in jewelry and wearing a billowing, half-open shirt.) Baucus won the races, respectively, with 73 and 63 percent of the vote.

The implosion of the Montana Republican party has shaken up Baucus's position on the state's political spectrum. Today, most of his colleagues in elected office are no longer to his right, but to his left.

Montana has always had a touch of the prairie socialism more often found in Minnesota or Saskatchewan, particularly on the issue of health care. The governor, Brian Schweitzer, first made his political reputation by ferrying seniors across the border to Alberta to fill their prescriptions. Jon Tester, Montana's junior senator, expressed sympathy for single-payer health care on the campaign trail, though he has supported the Baucus negotiations, and Baucus has supported him back—hosting a fundraiser this month for Tester at his family ranch.

The difference between Montana's two Democratic senators is stark. Baucus is dapper and trim; eyes roll when, speaking to a home audience, the senator starts sentences with, "As a hunter . . ." He is not credible. Tester, meanwhile, looks the part of a bona fide, aw-shucks Montanan: 300 pounds, a flat-top haircut, three fingers lost in a meat-grinder accident. Elected on a wave of outrage over the Abramoff scandal, Tester retains a common touch and exhibits a residual sense of outrage and bewilderment "at what goes on in *Warsh*ington." He was the only Senate Democrat to vote against both the Wall Street and auto-industry bailouts.

Baucus, by contrast, helped shepherd the stimulus through the Senate. Firebrand idealism has never really been his thing, and uncharismatic would be a charitable description. He is, all agree, a terrible public speaker. After one particularly unimpressive address, replete with awkward pauses, umming and awwing, and nary a complete sentence, Baucus staffers were asked about their boss's speaking style. "It's always like this," one aide sighed. "He's better in committee mark-ups."

Another Democrat, a state legislator, says he still wonders "how such a horrible speaker went so far."

Max Baucus

DARREN GYGI

Will it matter that Baucus lacks the common touch? In the increasingly public debate over health care, it may. Americans are polarized, and the events of the August recess have hardened legislators. To introduce an unfamiliar middle option—the Baucus team's idea is a system of not-for-profit insurance cooperatives—will require explanation and persuasive assurances that it is not merely a public option by another name.

Baucus probably isn't the man to do this. Barack Obama staged a town hall in Montana, but the senator is holding none this summer. Instead, his days are a series of pre-planned events that are a bit of a snooze (one on "prevention and wellness strategies," another on water rights) mixed with unannounced appearances, as if on a lark, at coffee shops across Montana. Moreover, both the Left and the Right will inevitably label Baucus's plan "the insurance industry's plan"—not an entirely inaccurate description. It is surely the legislation most favored by insurers and pharmaceutical makers, whose executives and PACs give more to Baucus than to any other senator.

All of this assumes Baucus's negotiations will succeed in the first place. Negotiators may well return to the table unnerved by their experiences in August. Charles Grassley, the senior Republican member of the panel, already has speculated that the process may not produce a bill he could vote for.

Meanwhile, Obama seems to have opened to the Baucus scheme. In Montana, the president referred persistently to "Max and I" and "our plan" in his comments in Montana before describing a co-op system—a big difference from the out-and-out public option that has been the White House's preference thus far.

If a few Republicans acquiesce to this plan, it is likely to become the foundation of the health-care reform. If not, liberal senators have made clear their intention of proceeding without Baucus. A floor vote on the public option would provide the real test of Baucus and other so-called moderates. Would they support it? Or would it be a return to 1994, when Democrats themselves were the undoing of their party's first major legislative effort under a new and hopeful administration? **NR**

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A Matter of Scale

Cap-and-trade, despite some successes, is no panacea for greenhouse-gas emissions

BY FRED SCHWARZ

A COMMON liberal talking point is that, based on the historical record, reducing greenhouse gases should be fairly easy. After all, acid rain was once a terrible problem, but government regulations have brought it under control in most developed countries (though it remains a scourge of the developing world). Similarly, chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs, a family of chemicals sometimes called by the trade name Freon) once threatened to destroy the ozone layer, which shields the Earth from nasty ultraviolet rays. But thanks to a series of international agreements, CFCs, too, have been phased out almost entirely.

Neither of these tasks was easy, but both were critically important, and as soon as their urgency became clear, they were largely accomplished within a couple of decades. It might seem, then, that a similar push could reduce carbon dioxide (and other greenhouse gases) to acceptable levels just as quickly. But cutting carbon dioxide emissions is a much greater task than either of these precedents would suggest. Making a significant dent in America's output would require not just modest adjustments in a few industries, but wholesale changes in virtually every sector of the economy. It's like the difference between getting a tune-up and buying a new car.

Consider acid rain. It has been causing trouble since the start of the Industrial Revolution—killing plant and animal life, altering soil chemistry, eating away at buildings and monuments, and harming human health. The biggest culprit is sulfur dioxide, an impurity present in coal and other fossil fuels; the other main acid-rain gases are nitrogen oxide and nitrogen dioxide, collectively known as NOx.

What makes the acid-rain story seem so appealing is that industrial emissions were reduced through a cap-and-trade scheme similar to the one proposed in the current Waxman-Markey bill. Companies were allocated permits (called "allowances") based on the amount of sulfur dioxide they were already emitting. Over time, the tonnage corresponding to each allowance was reduced, which meant emissions had to be reduced. Companies that cut down by more than the necessary amount (by installing scrubbers on smokestacks, shutting plants, improving efficiency, using cleaner fuel such as natural gas, treating coal to remove impurities, or shifting to other forms of energy) could sell their extra allowances to companies that had not made sufficient reductions. The result: a 40 percent decrease in sulfur dioxide emissions in the United States since 1990, with further reductions to come. (A separate allowance scheme, but with no provision for trading, has achieved similar results for NOx.)

Can cap-and-trade reduce carbon dioxide emissions as successfully as it did with sulfur dioxide? The Environmental Defense Fund thinks so: "What is cap and trade? It's the policy that stopped acid rain. Our goal is to apply the same principles to stop climate change." Sam Napolitano, director of the EPA's Clean Air Markets Division, told SolveClimate.com that the acid-rain regime has stimulated engineering creativity, and if Waxman-Markey passes, "our expectation is that industry will again figure out [solutions] beyond what we are already aware of what we can do."

Unfortunately, the two problems are vastly different in scale. The key point to understand is that sulfur is an impurity, present in fossil fuels in small amounts (usually less than 1 percent). But carbon *is* fossil fuels; it's what they're made of (usually 75 to 90 percent). Cutting sulfur dioxide is not complicated: If other methods don't work, a power plant that burns coal (which accounts for about half of America's electricity) can bring its emissions below the cap with a scrubber. They don't come cheap; a typical model costs about $100 million, with additional running costs. Once the scrubber is in place, though, the problem is largely solved; you might even make some of the cost back by selling your unneeded allowances.

Reducing America's carbon dioxide output to any significant degree would be a much greater problem. Engineers are studying a technology called carbon sequestration, in which a power plant's carbon dioxide output is collected, liquefied, and stored underground. This method is already being tested, and on a pilot-project scale it can probably be made to work. But cost would be a major obstacle: $1 billion or so to retrofit an existing plant, or a similar amount to equip a new one, plus hundreds of millions to install a pipeline between the plant and the nearest geologically suitable burial site. An even bigger obstacle would be the energy requirement: Depending on the method, as much as 40 percent of a power plant's output would go to running the sequestration and pumping systems. It's also far from clear that enough suitable and accessible storage sites can be found.

Until carbon sequestration becomes cheap and dependable—which will quite possibly turn out to be never—the only way to release less carbon dioxide into the atmosphere is to produce less of it in the first place. Switching from coal to cleaner-burning natural gas helps somewhat, so the trend toward building gas-fired plants may accelerate, though the future supply and price of gas are uncer-

Cap-and-trade for sulfur dioxide creates an expense item in a company's budget; cap-and-trade for carbon dioxide creates an entirely new, very expensive business model.

tain enough to make investors nervous. Outside of that, the only real alternative is to get more power from renewable sources. The problem with renewable sources is that environmentalists hate the ones that are cheapish and dependable (nuclear and hydroelectric), while the ones that environmentalists love are expensive and unreliable (wind, solar, geothermal, etc.). So if industry is forced to generate lots more power from wind and solar sources, the price of energy will get much higher and outages will be frequent.

Basically, cap-and-trade for sulfur dioxide creates an expense item in a company's budget; cap-and-trade for carbon dioxide creates an entirely new, very expensive business model. Acid-rain reduction has turned out to cost American industry only $1 to $2 billion per year, much less than predicted, but according to a Heritage Foundation study, the cost of Waxman-Markey would be easily 100 times as great. That's why the smooth success of acid-rain reduction is not a valid analogy for carbon dioxide. Another difference: Acid rain is a local problem; dirty air in Eastern Europe and China has little effect on America (though dirty air in Mexico is another matter). But greenhouse-gas emissions anywhere in the world increase the atmospheric concentration everywhere, so whatever reductions America makes will be overwhelmed by increases from rapidly industrializing Third World nations.

CFCs are another environmental success story. They were developed in the early 1930s as non-toxic, non-flammable gases for use in refrigeration and air conditioning; later they were also widely employed as aerosol propellants and in making foams, among other uses. In the mid-1970s CFCs' harmful effects on the ozone layer became clear, and it wasn't long before the leaders of most industrial nations understood the severity of the problem (Margaret Thatcher, trained as a chemist, was one of the most ardent proponents of vigorous action).

The turning point was the Montreal Protocol of 1987, an international agreement under which the production of CFCs has been almost completely phased out worldwide. With this reprieve, the ozone layer is coming back and is expected to recover completely by the middle of this century. Here again, a major pollutant was brought under control in a couple of decades through government action. Could something similar work for carbon dioxide?

Probably not. The most important point about CFCs is that substitutes for them are readily available. For nearly every application, chemists have found other molecules that work as well or nearly as well, cost about the same, and harm the ozone layer much less. (One of these substitutes, ironically, is carbon dioxide.) But when you're burning fossil fuels, there's no substitute for carbon, since that's where the energy comes from.

Moreover, just as with sulfur dioxide, the scale of the CFC problem is vastly different from that of greenhouse gases. For one thing, they were used in relatively small amounts. If you add up all the CFCs that have ever been produced in the entire world, the total is about 25 million metric tons. That's one-thousandth of today's *annual* global production of carbon dioxide from fossil fuels. Also, CFC use was concentrated in a few specific industries, whereas power and transportation, the main sources of carbon emissions, are intimately involved in just about every corner of the economy. At the same time, CFCs are much more dangerous: Unlike carbon dioxide, they are synthetic chemicals with no natural mechanisms to remove them from the air; they can linger in the upper atmosphere, causing mischief, for 50 years or more. Together, these factors made their near-complete eradication much easier and cheaper, as well as much more imperative, than even modest reductions in greenhouse gases will be.

To be sure, there are lessons to be learned from the CFC and acid-rain success stories. For example, technology can do amazing things to help keep nature pristine, and markets are a vital tool in cleaning up the environment. But the most important lesson is that the whole world can cooperate to defuse an environmental threat—if the nature of the threat is sufficiently clear, and the cost is judged to be worth it. However great and however certain the threats from climate change may be, the costs involved in preventing it will be vastly bigger that they were with CFCs and acid rain, and environmental advocates do the Earth no favors by pretending any different. **NR**

Hillary's Innocence Abroad

In Africa, Clinton offered sermons rather than diplomacy

BY R. W. JOHNSON

HILLARY CLINTON'S eleven-day trip through Africa was an odd affair. The proximate reason for it was that Obama's election awakened wholly unrealistic expectations throughout Africa that the new president would make African affairs one of his priorities. Then, en route from the G-8 summit, Obama visited Ghana to pat that country on the head for having emerged as a democracy. This created considerable jealousies in other African countries that felt they had a better claim on his attention—Kenya because the Obamas hail from there, South Africa because it is the continent's most developed state, Nigeria because it is the most populous, and so on.

So Hillary followed up by visiting not only these three but also Angola, because it sells oil to the United States; the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), because it is rich in raw materials and also provides a lesson about everything that's wrong with Africa; Liberia, because of its historical ties to America and because in Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf it has Africa's only female president; and Cape Verde, because it was on the way.

Just before Clinton landed in Kenya, that country's prime minister, Raila Odinga, said he hoped he wouldn't have to endure another lecture on corruption and misgovernance and how the continent's leaders really must brush up their act. He was doubtless disappointed, as Clinton launched into just that sort of temperance-rally sermon at every stop. How seriously, one wonders, would Americans take a foreign politician who

Mr. Johnson is a journalist and historian based in South Africa. His latest book is South Africa's Brave New World: The Beloved Country Since the End of Apartheid.

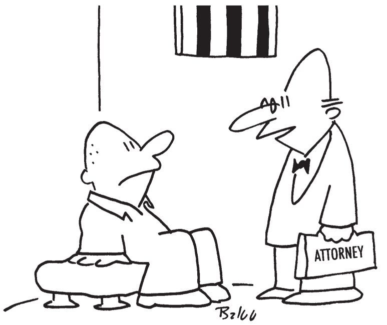
swung through their country in a day or two, telling anyone who would listen that, really, the U.S. ought to get its act together on health care?

But it was quickly clear that this was all the secretary of state had to offer. She preached homilies about governance, warned that American investors are put off by countries in which the president takes 10 percent of every deal, preached freer trade between Africa and the U.S., and expressed shock that no one had been charged for all the killings that followed the last elections in Kenya. She also delivered a speech against sexual abuse in the DRC, a nation that has been in a perpetual state of civil war and disorder for more than 40 years, where every possible crime and atrocity has been committed, where some 4 million have died in the violence of the last 20 years alone—and where an indignant little speech about sexual abuse has as much impact as tut-tutting about lynching would have had in the 19th century South. But what really got Clinton's attention was the Congolese student who asked her about Bill's thinking on such-and-such. Mrs. Clinton's indignation emerged: Was someone treating her like Tammy Wynette again? She furiously reminded her questioner that she, not her husband, is secretary of state. We never got to hear what Bill thinks.

How seriously, one wonders, would Americans take a foreign politician who swung through their country in a day or two, telling anyone who would listen that, really, the U.S. ought to get its act together on health care?

One might have been reminded of Mark Twain's *Innocents Abroad* during Secretary Clinton's tour. She came with all the predictable reflexes of a pert, politically correct, late-20th-century feminist, and she exhibited them at every turn. That was amusing enough, but no less hilarious were the polite applause and smiling embraces she received from the African elite, often the very ones guilty of everything she was preaching against. In Angola she praised the regime for having brought peace to the shattered country after so many years of civil war, astonishing Angolans who remembered only too well that the U.S. had backed the regime's opponents in that war. She also made predictable remarks about wanting to see greater transparency in the disposition of the country's oil wealth, lamenting that it is concentrated among a small elite against a backdrop of mass poverty. These remarks will have been water off a duck's back to the Angolan kleptocrats, who are used to hearing and ignoring such homilies and confident that their oil makes them desirable partners, no matter their conduct.

Clinton seemed almost angry when journalists asked her questions about power politics. Was she responding to China's increasing presence on the continent? Not at all; she had no reflections to offer on China's diplomacy. (The germane comparison for most African leaders is of course that the Chinese have no interest in reading them lectures on human rights or good governance.) Was she talking to local leaders about where the U.S. could site the military headquarters of its Africa Command? The very suggestion shocked her. Was she trying to push African leaders into a stronger stance against Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe? By no means—and when she got to South Africa, the pivotal state when it comes to influencing Zimbabwe, no formal meeting had been arranged with the new president, Jacob Zuma. In the end, it was agreed that Zuma—who, as is his wont, had been happily counting his cattle in his village of Nkandla—would fly down to Durban, there to meet with Clinton for half an hour in the airport lounge. She emerged from this meeting full of praise for the wise counsel and advice she had received.



"I think your best bet is to hang yourself in your cell."

There were quickly rumors that Zuma would indeed be taking a tougher line on Zimbabwe, and that there had been a fresh start in U.S.–South African relations after the frostiness that characterized them during the presidency of Zuma's predecessor Thabo Mbeki. Whether this is actually so remains to be seen. The anti-American instincts of the ruling African National Congress run deep. And Africa watchers have often seen leaders emerge delighted from a meeting with the genial Zuma and say how friendly and supportive he was, only later to realize that they had been gladhanded and that Zuma had evaded any and all binding commitments. Still, the U.S. is now working harmoniously with the South African government to combat AIDS, something unimaginable under Mbeki.

In South Africa as in Cape Verde, Clinton praised democratic initiatives and said, "America has much to learn" from these countries. One wonders how her old New York constituents would react to the notion that they had much to learn from Cape Verde: from *where*? At the end of her trip, Clinton enthused about the energy of many ordinary Africans she'd met and their tireless commitment to partying. There were, she said, even some evenings when she had not got to bed by 10 P.M. New Yorkers would perhaps have something irreverent to say about that, too.

One wonders what Clinton really made of it all. No previous secretary of state has given such a generous commitment of time, and so early on, to Africa. This alone has kept alive the extravagant expectations many Africans have of the Obama administration. Yet as the problems in the Middle East, Iran, North Korea, and China crowd in, it will be a surprise if America's priorities really change at all. **NR**

Bear Right

The specter of a Greater Russia?

BY JOHN O'SULLIVAN

CLAD in a black jacket over an open-necked black shirt, speaking directly into the camera against the backdrop of a summer coastline, Russian president Dmitry Medvedev looked every inch the Moscow mafioso out on a hot date. This was not an inappropriate "look" given that his script—a video open letter to the Ukrainian president, Viktor Yushchenko—was a series of velvet menaces. Officially he was justifying Russia's decision not to send its ambassador to Kiev; between the lines he urged Ukrainians to vote against Yushchenko in next year's January election; under the smoothness he seemed to be hinting at altogether nastier possibilities if his overtures were rejected.

Medvedev's tone ranged from apparent frankness—"The tension in Ukraine–Russia relations is getting off the scale"—to the veiled threat: "Fraternal peoples cannot be severed; we have the same historical and spiritual heritage." And, finally, there came the less veiled threat: "I'm convinced that the multifaceted connections between Russia and Ukraine will return, but on a qualitatively new level—a strategic-partnership level. And that time is not far off."

In between, he argued that Ukraine was guilty of a series of offenses, from illegally supplying arms to Georgia, to harming Russian gas sales by concluding an energy deal with the European Union, to falsifying history in order to suggest that World War II was a conflict between the two totalitarian systems of Nazism and Soviet Communism. The range of Ukraine's supposed offenses—military, political, economic, religious, cultural, historiographical—is vast. All of the accusations either have to do with perfectly legitimate activities or have no foundation in fact. Together they depict a Ukraine straining for every kind of conflict with Russia—a picture that, as well as being false, is plainly at variance with Ukraine's national interests. So they inadvertently reveal a Russia straining for every kind of conflict with Ukraine.

The least practical charge, Medvedev's denunciation of "pseudo-historical investigations," may be the most significant one. The desire of Ukrainians to present an accurate history of Stalin's deliberate starvation of their parents and grandparents undermines both the simplistic "fraternal peoples" theme of Medvedev's history lesson and the Soviet legitimacy that the Putin-Medvedev regime has been seeking to restore. Medvedev could not even bring himself to state accurately the most damaging historical accusation made by Ukrainians. Along with Poles, Belarusians, and almost all historians outside Russia, most of them know that in the first two years of the 1939–45 war there was not a conflict between Nazi and Soviet totalitarianisms but an outright alliance between them. Since the 70th anniversary of the Nazi-Soviet pact falls on August 23, the Kremlin is currently anxious to discourage correct historical interpretations or even memories of this. It is too close to home in every sense.

Medvedev's bullying tone, list of grievances, and veiled threats were all too redolent of the world of the 1930s. They were redolent too, however, of the world last year—the protection of separatists, a border incident, the military maneuvers ending just as a nearby conflict unexpectedly began, the iron fist, and finally the Russian annexation of Georgia and South Ossetia. At the time, pundits said that the Russo–Georgian war was less important in its own right than as a warning to Ukraine. Was that warning now being fulfilled? Was Medvedev's speech a more urgent version of it? And does it presage a more active Russian stance of military intervention abroad?

Some in Moscow certainly thought so. Alexander Dugin of the nationalist think tank Eurasia Movement predicted that Russia was preparing to derecognize Ukrainian territorial integrity: "An armed conflict may soon begin in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine that will result in these territories' becoming a Russian protectorate." Well, possibly. According to recent opinion polls, the Russian public is growing increasingly hostile to Ukraine—the rejected-lover syndrome visible in Medvedev's talk. In this nationalist mood, Russian opinion might quite like a forced Russo-Ukrainian marriage.

Also, the Kremlin has just introduced legislation into the Duma (certain to be passed) that enables the president to send troops abroad to "defend Russian soldiers and citizens, fight piracy, and defend foreign nations against threats." This looks more like a domestic political tidying-up to clarify who in government has the power to order troop movements than a move to intimidate neighbors. As several pundits have pointed out, it tacitly admits that last year's invasion of Georgia was illegal. Nonetheless it clears the constitutional decks for actions such as an invasion of Ukraine. Neighbors therefore have to take it seriously.

But that leaves open the question of whether such an invasion would be likely to succeed. Writing in the Jamestown Foundation's *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, the respected Russian military commentator Pavel Felgenhauer is pretty skeptical all round: "The Russian military at present is clearly not ready to take on an offensive 'liberation' campaign deep within Ukraine. The Ukrainian armed forces are ineffective, but the territory of the possible theater of conflict is vast and densely populated, requiring a massive deployment of well-prepared troops. Russia needs at least three more years of radical military modernization and some rearmament, before it may contemplate a Crimea and Ukraine mission." After the unexpected mauling that its forces got at the hands of the small Georgian army, Russia is unlikely to take needless risks. In the meantime, however, Russia may continue to wage economic- and political-destabilization campaigns against Ukraine, Georgia, and other parts of the post-Soviet space on which its paranoia alights—with the potential military threat hovering in the background.

If so, how is Ukraine likely to withstand such a war of nerves? First reactions have been mixed. For the government, Yushchenko gave a reasoned but firm response to Medvedev, rejecting his velvet threats point by point. But the president is politically weak. He is running a poor third behind the two neck-and-neck frontrunners, Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko and opposition leader Viktor Yanukovich. Both would be more acceptable to Moscow than Yushchenko—

Yanukovich more than Tymoshenko. Neither in practice would want to return to being under the Kremlin's thumb. And though Ukraine is divided between a pro-European west and a pro-Russian east, both halves have gotten used to being independent. Recent opinion polls suggest that though many Ukrainians are unaware of Medvedev's speech, those who are aware of it regard his keeping home the Russian ambassador to be an "unfriendly" act. So a few more speeches by Medvedev would help Tymoshenko and maybe, just maybe, even tip the election towards Yushchenko. In either event Ukraine would probably continue to be a bone in Moscow's throat.

For as long as Russia felt unable to use force—at least three years in the above calculation—the Moscow–Kiev battle would be waged mainly over economics and, in particular, over the European Union's policy towards both countries. Should closer EU-Russia economic cooperation go ahead? Should Russia be admitted to the EU's Eastern Partnership, which is designed to protect Ukraine and other post-Soviet Eastern countries outside the Union?

Europe itself is bitterly though quietly divided over how to deal with these questions. In July, a stratospherically distinguished group of Central and East European statesmen, including Lech Walesa and Vaclav Havel, sent their own open letter to the Obama administration appealing for stronger U.S. intervention in European affairs—in effect because Western Europe alone could not be relied upon to defend democracy, national sovereignty, and the maintenance of a common Atlantic defense.

These pro-American leaders were unsparingly realistic in their description of Russian policy: "Russia is back as a revisionist power pursuing a 19th-century agenda with 21st-century tactics and methods. . . . It asserts a privileged position in determining our security choices. It uses overt and covert means of economic warfare, ranging from energy blockades and politically motivated investments to bribery and media manipulation in order to advance its interests and to challenge the transatlantic orientation of Central and Eastern Europe." They warned against "too narrow an understanding of Western interests" leading to wrong concessions to Russia. They specifically cited the Russo–Georgian war as an occasion on which "many countries were deeply disturbed to see the Atlantic alliance stand by as Russia violated the core principles of the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of Paris, and the territorial integrity of a country that was a member of NATO's Partnership for Peace and the Euroatlantic Partnership Council—all in the name of defending a sphere of influence on its borders."

But as they conceded, not all Europeans shared their anxieties. Most Western European states—partly excluding Britain, Sweden, and Holland—place a higher value on friendly relations and trade with Russia than on defending the West and Western values. And though it was France's President Sarkozy who negotiated the indulgent deal with Russia over Georgia, it is Germany that dominates the making of EU policy towards Russia. And in Germany there is a surprising degree of all-party agreement in favor of a strong economic and political Russo-German "strategic partnership."

Only a few days after the East European leaders issued their open letter to President Obama, former chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, a Social Democrat now employed by Russia's Gazprom, issued his own appeal that the U.S. "not allow itself to be influenced" by them. One month later, days after the Medvedev video letter, current Christian Democratic chancellor Angela Merkel announced a series of economic deals after a summit with the Russian leader—but remained silent on Ukraine and related issues. (She raised the human-rights violations in Chechnya on which Medvedev himself has called for tougher investigations.) Merkel had made plain earlier that Germany would oppose NATO membership for Georgia and Ukraine. Much establishment and business opinion in Germany now favors a further "deepening" of the economic relationship between the EU and Russia. And if Germany persuades its EU partners to go down this road, it is likely to be at the expense of Ukraine and Russia's other in-between neighbors—even if it does make good business sense and offer the diplomatic equivalent of a quiet life.

Medvedev's speech confirms the fears of East European leaders. Russia increasingly ignores international, legal, and moral norms. And such a state is unpredictable. **NR**

Town Hall Summer

It's about health care, sure; it's also about watching Arlen Specter look like he's about to cry

BY ROB LONG

THE Chinese go nuts once every 50 years or so. The last time was around 1966, when the country erupted into something called the Cultural Revolution, and leading political and intellectual figures were suddenly excoriated. Government bureaucrats and university professors, used to deference and kowtowing and lives of privilege, were turned on by the mob, paraded through the streets in dunce caps, forced to wear insulting sandwich boards, and remanded to work farms for reeducation and to learn a little humility.

Not an entirely bad system, when you really think about it.

I think one of my followers on Twitter put it best: "No matter which side of the health-care debate you're on," he wrote, "yelling at Arlen Specter looks like fun."

It does, doesn't it? Kind of a late-summer, throw-together-a-picnic kind of thing. Baseball games, the smell of cotton candy, Shakespeare in the Park, bellowing at your senator—it all has a nice ring to it, don't you think?

And how perfectly timed! Gas prices are creeping up, unemployment is floating around 10 percent, the economy just sits there like it's waiting to hear from the local Death Panel—it's no wonder a lot of Americans are cutting back on the two-week summer-holiday cash hemorrhage and opting, instead, for something the colorful phrasemakers in the news media are calling a "staycation."

But just because you're staying put for the summer, there's no reason you have to splash listlessly in the above-ground pool in the backyard. Your senator is in town! Put on some clothes—it doesn't matter what, really: if you wear something nice, they'll just call you a Republican-party operative; if you wear a T-shirt, shorts, and a trucker's cap, they'll make sniffy, snotty comments about "white trash"—and head on over to the local community center and make some noise.

"I don't have to be here," Sen. Arlen Specter (D., Pa.) muttered to the angry crowd when his town hall spun out of control, which caused his town hall to spin even further out of control. It's rare that something so perfectly crystallizes the emotional issue at hand, but Sen. Arlen Specter (D., Pa.), face squeezed shut, staring in baffled rage at the collection of T-shirts and potbellies and summer farmer's tans that bobbed and pointed and shouted at him, sums up the American Cultural Revolution Tour of Summer '09 perfectly. The only thing missing was the dunce cap and the insulting sign, but if you've got the right software you can burn one into the YouTube video.

After all of the shouting and the YouTubing and the fun, they're all *still there*, in Washington, cooking up mischief.

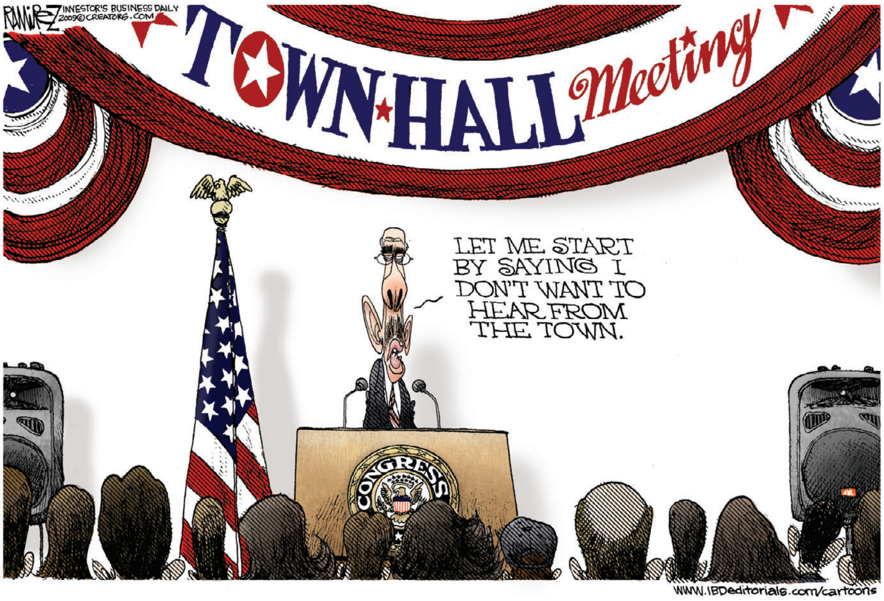
Of course, the Chinese version took ten years to exhaust itself and involved a lot of unsavory things like work camps and show trials. Ours, with typical American casualness, is all about Facebook and the Flip camera, and the whole thing is going to be wrapped up by the time everyone's summer staycation is over and the kids go back to school.

It's strictly a summer affair—when there are soccer games to get to and the weather gets chilly, most of the firebrands will be too busy and distracted to head on out to their senators' district offices to make a little trouble. Who has time, with kids to carpool and work getting stressful and now the holidays are coming, to ink funny hand-lettered signs and Xerox handouts and make the lemonade? No one, that's who. So the town-hall shoutouts will stop—and so will the town halls and office ambushes, for the foreseeable future—and Americans will turn their attention to other things.

Also: They'll have succeeded. Whatever health-care plan eventually gets wiggled through—and that's a big assumption to begin with—it will be a pale, face-saving shell of a plan, thanks only to the bumptious mob of angry staycationers. Because, let's face it, the Republicans in Congress, if the timetable hadn't perfectly aligned with a recession and summer vacation, would have sat down with their Democratic colleagues and made a deal.

And that's the bad news coming out of the American Cultural Revolution of Summer '09: After all of the shouting and the YouTubing and the fun, they're all *still there*, in Washington, cooking up mischief. Unlike the characteristically more efficient Chinese model, there is no second phase to the ritual humiliation. In China, it was 1) march discredited, bourgeois backslider through the streets on his way to 2) the Glorious May 4 Collective Radish Farm.

Who among us, deep down, doesn't think that, say, Sen. Arlen Specter (D., Pa.) would benefit from a little forced radish farming?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Put it out of your mind. We're going to let them all off the hook, in the end. We're going to wrap up our summer tantrums and start thinking about Halloween candy and Thanksgiving plans and Christmas lists, because Americans, even self-described conservatives, are perfectly willing to accept big-government intervention—in the housing markets, in retirement savings, in elder health care, in prescription drugs, in agriculture, in you name it—as long as the progress is incremental, and as long as everyone gets some cheese. That's how big-government liberals have succeeded in the past, and when they retreat to their blogs to lick their wounds and regroup, they'll come back at us with a smaller, incremental, bite-sized "solution" that we'll accept, and in ten years we'll be sitting in the doctor's office waiting for our local-medical-insurance-co-op-approved three-minute checkup and think to ourselves, "When did *this* happen?"

The fun, spirited, energized mobs that have terrified people like Sen. Arlen Specter (D., Pa.) and chased congressmen to their cars weren't really arguing for a rational health-care system—they weren't agitating for *less* government. In many ways, they were arguing for a *more generous* system, one that covers everything, for everyone. What's the current controversy centered on? Death panels! Well, I'll probably regret admitting this, but if I have to subsidize everyone else's health care out of my paycheck, I'm going to *demand* death panels. I'll take one look at my sad little pay stub and think: *Pull the plug on Grandma!*

Repealing the Ponzi scheme that is Medicare, creating a free-market-based health-insurance system—all of these things, or versions of them, anyway, are what conservatives know in their hearts is the right way to tackle the health-care problem in America. But that really wasn't what all the shouting was about during Town Hall Summer. It was about the fun of watching Sen. Arlen Specter (D., Pa.) look like he was about to cry.

Which isn't an entirely bad way to spend a staycation. **NR**

Rubio Rising

The Florida GOP has a new star

BY JOHN J. MILLER

FLORIDA governor Charlie Crist is running for the Senate, and he isn't supposed to lose—let alone lose in the Republican primary. He enjoys a high approval rating, has a history of success among voters, and raises campaign cash with the intensity of a Category 5 hurricane. His main opponent in the GOP primary is Marco Rubio, a 38-year-old Miami native who quotes Snoop Dogg lyrics on his Twitter account. On paper, it looks like a mismatch between an unbeatable juggernaut and a doomed also-ran.

Yet Crist may be vulnerable: He warmly embraced President Obama's stimulus spending and is one of the most liberal politicians in the Republican firmament. Rubio is among the brightest young stars on the right. Their contest could become the sleeper race of 2010.

That would spoil the well-laid plans of many in the GOP establishment. They want the Senate race in Florida to be over before it starts. In May, when Crist declared that he would forgo a second term as governor and aim for the seat of retiring senator Mel Martinez, the National Republican Senatorial Committee waited all of 14 minutes to endorse him. "I never thought I'd see the day when a conservative was the insurgent in a Republican primary," says Rubio. Yet this is precisely what he has become: a heavy underdog who must learn to wage the political version of asymmetric warfare. A recent Mason–Dixon poll gave Crist a big lead over his rival, 51 percent to 23 percent.

The election remains a year away. For a primary, it's late on the calendar: Aug. 24, 2010. That gives Rubio plenty of time to catch up. The details of the Mason–Dixon poll suggest that he'll have a fighting chance. Among Republicans who are familiar with both candidates, Crist's lead slips to statistical insignificance. It's basically a dead heat. "I'm not a kamikaze," says Rubio. "At this time next year, you're going to be analyzing a very different race." For that prediction to come true, conservatives in Florida and around the country will have to turn Rubio's candidacy into a cause.

MARCO ANTONIO RUBIO was born in 1971, the son of Cuban exiles. His father worked late nights as a bartender. His mother was a hotel maid and a stock clerk at Kmart. They lived in Miami, moved to Las Vegas for a few years, and finally returned to Florida. "I gained an interest in politics and history from my uncle, who would read books and newspapers out loud to us," says Rubio. As with many boys, sports were a priority. He played defensive back for his high-school football team. He says he has a recurring dream—a

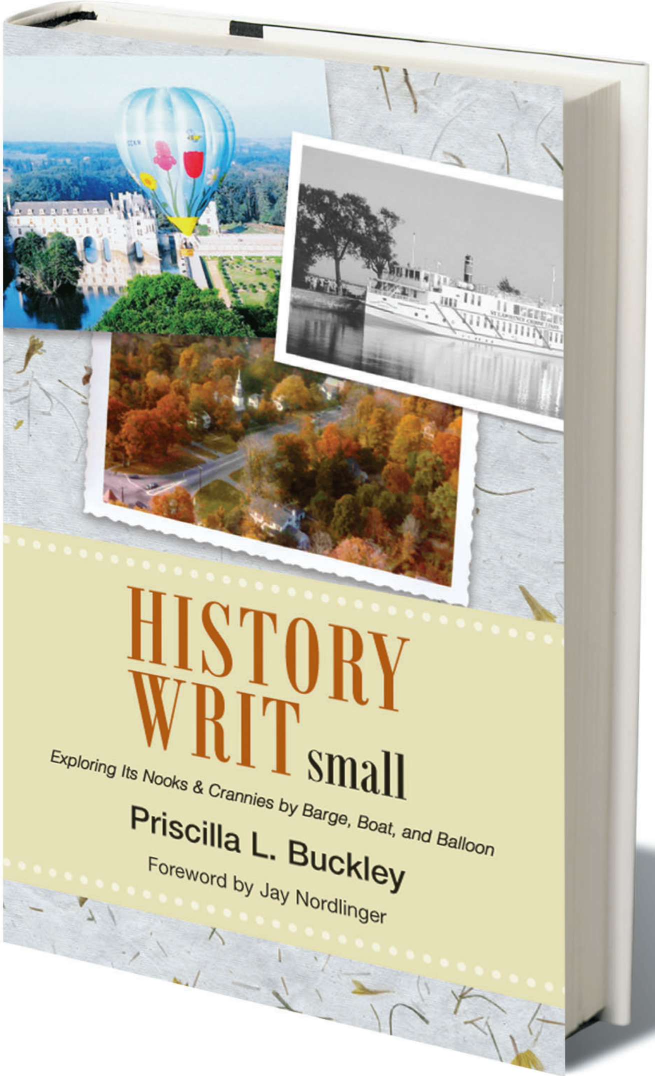
JOE RAEDLE/GETTY

Up, Up, and Away With Priscilla Buckley

a new delightful book from *NR*’s most seasoned travel writer

As Jay Nordlinger writes in his grand foreword to *History Writ Small: Exploring Its Nooks and Crannies by Barge, Boat, and Balloon*, “Priscilla Buckley writes who she is. That is, her writing is graceful, lovely, intelligent, learned, amusing, assured, civilized—you get the picture. Nice picture. . . .” And indeed it it nice. Even pretty. Here’s just a sweet taste of the kind of beautiful writing you will find in this charming new book:

> Michel calls to the crowd that has gathered. “*Alors!* We need your help!” And soon, a dozen or more people are pulling on the ropes. And they bring us to a halt three feet from the barbed wire fence that marks the end of the field. The four Atkinsons get out at Michel’s order, but Jane and I remain aboard as ballast. A blast from the burner, and we lift a bit, away from the dangerous fence. Another two blasts, and we are safe. The balloon pulls the basket over—a layover, they call it—and Jane and I, flat on our backs for a moment, find slithering out on the whole easier than climbing out, if less dignified. Michel kisses the ladies on both cheeks, *comme ci*, right cheek, *comme ça*, left cheek, and shakes Jack’s and young Greg’s hands. We’ve covered an estimated 25 kilometers in just over two hours—*Santé!* everyone.
>
> And so the flights go, each different. We might have Buddy playing games—brushing through the treetops, putting down on the still waters of a lake or pond—or Michel swooping low over a village and calling out to a family having its summer dinner in the garden: “*Bon appétit!*” or, “*La belle brune!*” in salute to the handsome mother of the family. Children in pyjamas, waving from attic windows: “Where are you going?” they call, and Jane calls back, “Wherever the wind takes us.” “Come back,” they plead, but come back we cannot. The wind says no.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"nightmare," he calls it—about a playoff game in 1987: "We should have won, but the referees called back a play, we missed a field goal, and our team lost."

Rubio was talented enough to earn a scholarship to Tarkio College in Missouri. After a year, he left the gridiron and transferred to the University of Florida. Then came law school at the University of Miami. He remains an avid football fan and keeps fit playing in a competitive flag-football league. "Don't disturb him during Miami Dolphins games," warns a former colleague. "He doesn't just watch them—he studies them." Rubio's devotion to the Dolphins is a family affair: His wife is a former team cheerleader. They have four children.

Early on, Rubio began to dabble in politics. He interned for Republican congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and later coordinated the Dole-Kemp campaign in Miami–Dade County. "That was a tough assignment, but Marco was passionate," says Al Cardenas, a former chair of the Florida GOP. "He had good people skills and helped the volunteers keep their spirits up. That's when I first thought he might be going places."

In 1998, at the age of 26, Rubio stepped into public life: He won a race to serve on the West Miami city commission. The next year, a spot opened in the state legislature. Rubio declared his candidacy in the special election and finished second in the Republican primary. This led to a runoff, and a lot of hustling: He walked neighborhoods, knocked on doors, and raised enough money to broadcast a few radio ads. In the end, he pulled off a minor upset, winning by 64 votes. It was the last time he faced a difficult race. The district was safe for Republicans, and voters sent him back to Tallahassee four times. Last year, term limits prevented him from running again.

As a young legislator, Rubio caught the eye of his elders. "He's got all the tools," says Jeb Bush, the former governor. "He's charismatic and has the right principles." Rubio compiled a conservative voting record and started to climb the GOP's leadership ladder, eventually becoming speaker of the House. The capitol's veterans occasionally mistook him for an aide: Lt. Gov. Toni Jennings once marched into his office, handed him a stack of papers, and asked him to make copies. At the time, Rubio was majority leader. "I did make the copies," he says. For the most part, however, his youth was an asset. "I watched him grow up in the House," says Lindsay Harrington, a former speaker pro tem. "He has an amazing ability to deliver a message—when he gives a speech, you can hear a pin drop."

That's what observers say about Rubio, over and over again: He's a first-rate communicator. "He has a gift," says Larry Cretul, the current House speaker. "People love listening to him." He certainly has a flair for one-liners. Cap-and-trade legislation, he says, "will do nothing but make America one of the cleanest Third World economies." He urges the GOP to avoid ethnic pandering, and dismisses concerns that opposition to the Supreme Court nomination of Sonia Sotomayor would hurt Republicans among Hispanics: "We don't need more mariachi bands at the rallies."

Thanks to YouTube, Rubio's farewell address last year probably has been seen by more viewers than any other speech in the history of the Florida statehouse. That may sound like faint praise, and Rubio's clip doesn't compete with web sensations such as Susan Boyle or Obama Girl. But he's gone about as viral as any state legislator can hope to go without setting his pants on fire. More recently, he has taken advantage of Twitter. He comments on everything from the state of his campaign to how long it takes his wife to get ready for a night out.

Behind the rhetoric and panache, there's substance. When Rubio became speaker, he unveiled a plan to develop "100 innovative ideas for Florida's future." He and other officials traveled the state, holding "idea-raisers" with voters. The stated goal was to find ways to improve life in Florida without unduly increasing the size of government. The result was a conservative legislative agenda, released on the web and as a short book. Judging from the recommendations Rubio adopted, it would seem that everybody in Florida was an intern at the Heritage Foundation. Fifty-seven of the proposals were passed, many of them small-bore. The most ambitious was No. 96, which called for capping or eliminating the state property tax and replacing it with a revenue-neutral sales-tax hike. "We couldn't get Crist or the state senators to go along with it—they didn't want to be bold," says Rubio. "That was probably my biggest disappointment as speaker. Florida could be in a much stronger position today." In his bid for the Senate, tax reform remains his No. 1 talking point.

Marco Rubio certainly has a flair for one-liners. Cap-and-trade legislation, he says, 'will do nothing but make America one of the cleanest Third World economies.'

RUBIO'S efforts on the campaign trail are starting to pay off. This summer, he has won lopsided victories in straw polls conducted by GOP executive committees. In June, Pasco County Republicans favored Rubio by a vote of 73 to 9. In July, Rubio trounced Crist in Lee County (60 to 11) and Highland County (75 to 1). Technically, these tallies are meaningless. Yet they express a growing disillusionment with Crist at the party's core. The governor's global-warming alarmism has unsettled conservatives for a long time. Then there's his appointment of a liberal to the state supreme court, his approval of a state budget that raises cigarette taxes, and his hug of Obama at a political event in support of the president's spending plans. On August 12, Republicans in Palm Beach County held a vote to censure Crist. The measure failed, but only because the final vote was a tie. In this environment, Rubio begins to look like an attractive alternative.

The Republican case for Crist is simple and pragmatic: He'll win the seat, hands down, at a time when the GOP can't afford to take any chances. The number of Republicans in the U.S. Senate has dwindled to 40. Six incumbents have announced plans to retire, most of them in states where Democrats can be

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expected to compete. It's possible that Republicans will make gains next year in congressional races and the states but actually lose ground in the Senate. The fear is that Rubio will become a slightly more successful version of Pat Toomey, the former Pennsylvania congressman who electrified conservatives and nearly stole the GOP nomination from then-Republican Arlen Specter in 2004. Many think that giving the party's nod to Crist at least would remove a question mark from the political map. Rubio has a ready retort: "I can't beat Kendrick Meek?" he asks, in reference to the left-wing congressman who is the likely Democratic nominee.

Rubio has heard suggestions, in public and private, that he should seek a different office. He might run for state attorney general, for instance. Or he could be tapped as a candidate for lieutenant governor. Another opportunity to run for the Senate will present itself in 2012, when the current term of Democratic senator Bill Nelson expires. But Rubio says he won't budge: "I'm in this race to win. Many of the things that make America unique are threatened by politicians in Washington, D.C. We're going to make irreversible decisions over the next four to six years. I want to be a part of correcting the course."

Several factors may work to Rubio's advantage. The primary is closed, which means that only registered Republicans can participate. Turnout probably will be low, which increases the importance of conservative activists. Rubio also has started to attract national attention. Sen. Jim DeMint of South Carolina and former presidential candidate Mike Huckabee have endorsed him. Interestingly, Jeb Bush has remained quiet, fueling speculation that he might back Rubio if the race is close next summer. His son, Jeb Bush Jr., is a confirmed Rubio supporter. That Rubio is of Cuban ancestry doesn't hurt, either. "Finding Latino stars in the Republican party is a big deal," says Mike Murphy, a GOP political consultant and Rubio donor. "I don't want to pigeonhole him—I'd like him if he was Scandinavian—but it's a plus."

The biggest challenge for Rubio will be money. In the second quarter of this year, Crist amassed $4.3 million. Rubio managed about one-twelfth of that amount: $340,000. This low figure has caused some to question his discipline. A shake-up of his campaign staff this summer raised doubts, too. Rubio clearly enjoys the performance aspect of politics. To win, however, he'll also need to devote hours and hours of each day to the drudgery of fundraising: making cold calls, asking strangers for money, and receiving far more rejections than checks. This is the only way he'll gain the resources to put ads on television, which is the only way to compete in a large state with as many media markets as Florida.

The good news is that Rubio doesn't have to match Crist dollar for dollar. But he does need to hit a certain mark—enough to lift his name into the consciousness of most Florida Republicans. It can probably be done for about $5 million, give or take. Primaries are famously fluid, with lots of last-minute deciders. Candidates such as Rubio can close hard and fast in the final two or three weeks, but only if they spend a long time preparing to make the most of their opportunity.

Rubio may want to think of his task as a football game: He'll need to play from behind, hanging in there against a stronger opponent for a full four quarters and hoping to put himself in position for a game-winning kick as time runs out. Then the nightmare will belong to Charlie Crist. **NR**

Why the Stimulus FAILED

Fiscal policy cannot exnihilate new demand

BY BRIAN RIEDL

CONSERVATIVES have correctly declared President Obama's $787 billion "stimulus" a flop. In a January report, White House economists predicted the bill would create (not merely save) 3.3 million jobs. Since then, 2.8 million jobs have been lost, pushing unemployment toward 10 percent.

Yet few have explained correctly *why* the stimulus failed. By blaming the slow pace of stimulus spending (even though it's ahead of schedule), many conservatives have accepted the premise that government spending stimulates the economy. Their thinking implies that we should have spent much more by now.

History proves otherwise. In 1939, after a doubling of federal spending failed to relieve the Great Depression, Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau said that "we have tried spending money. We are spending more than we have ever spent before and it does not work. . . . After eight years of this administration we have just as much unemployment as when we started . . . and an enormous debt to boot!" Japan made the same mistake in the 1990s (building the largest government debt in the industrial world), and the United States is making it today.

This repeated failure has nothing to do with the pace or type of spending. Rather, the problem is found in the oft-repeated Keynesian myth that deficit spending "injects new dollars into the economy," thereby increasing demand and spurring economic growth. According to this theory, government spending adds money to the economy, taxes remove money, and the budget deficit represents net new dollars injected. Therefore, it scarcely matters how the dollars are spent. John Maynard Keynes famously asserted that a government program paying people to dig and then refill ditches would provide new income for those workers to spend and circulate through the economy, creating even more jobs and income. Today, lawmakers cling to estimates by Mark Zandi of Economy.com that on average, $1 in new deficit spending expands the economy by roughly $1.50.

If that were true, the record $1.6 trillion in deficit spending over the past fiscal year would have already overheated the economy. Yet despite this spending, which is equal to fully 9 percent of GDP, the economy is expected to shrink by at least 3 percent this fiscal year. If the spending constitutes an injection of "new money" into the economy, we may conclude that, without it, the economy would contract 12 percent—hardly a plausible claim.

If $1.6 trillion in deficit spending failed to slow the economy's slide, there's no reason to believe that adding $185 billion—the 2009 portion of the stimulus bill—will suddenly do the trick. But

Mr. Riedl is a research fellow at the Heritage Foundation.

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if budget deficits of nearly $2 trillion are insufficient stimulus, how much would be enough? $3 trillion? $4 trillion?

This is no longer a theoretical exercise. The idea that increased deficit spending can cure recessions has been tested, and it has failed. If growing the economy were as simple as expanding government spending and deficits, then Italy, France, and Germany would be the global economic kings. And there would be no reason to stop at $787 billion: Congress could guarantee unlimited prosperity by endlessly borrowing and spending trillions of dollars.

The simple reason government spending fails to end recessions is that Congress does not have a vault of money waiting to be distributed. Every dollar Congress "injects" into the economy must first be taxed or borrowed out of the economy. No new income, and therefore no new demand, is created. They are merely redistributed from one group of people to another. Congress cannot create new purchasing power out of thin air.

This is intuitively clear in the case of funding new spending with new taxes. Yet funding new spending with new borrowing is also pure redistribution, since the investors who lend Washington the money will have that much less to invest in the economy. The fact that borrowed funds (unlike taxes) must later be repaid by the government makes them no less of a zero-sum transfer today.

Even during recessions—when total production falls, leaving people with less income to spend—Congress cannot create new demand and income. Any government spending that increases production at factories and puts unemployed individuals to work will be financed by removing funds (and thus idling resources) elsewhere in the economy. This is true whether the unemployment rate is 5 percent or 50 percent.

For example, many lawmakers claim that every $1 billion in highway stimulus will create 47,576 new construction jobs. But Congress must first borrow that $1 billion out of the private economy, which will then lose a roughly equivalent number of jobs. As transportation-policy expert Ronald Utt has explained, "the only way that $1 billion of new highway spending can create 47,576 new jobs is if the $1 billion appears out of nowhere as if it were manna from heaven." Removing water from one end of a swimming pool and dumping it in the other end will not raise the overall water level. Similarly, moving dollars from one part of the economy to the other will not expand the economy. Not even in the short run.

Consider a simpler example. Under normal circumstances, a family might put its $1,000 savings in a certificate of deposit at the local bank. The bank would then lend that $1,000 to the local hardware store. This would have the effect of recycling that spending around the town, supporting local jobs. Now suppose that, induced by an offer of higher interest rates, the family instead buys a $1,000 government bond that funds the stimulus bill. Washington spends that $1,000 in a different town, creating jobs there instead. The stimulus bill has changed only the location of the spending.

The mistaken view of fiscal stimulus persists because we can easily see the people put to work with government funds. We don't see the jobs that would have been created elsewhere in the economy with those same dollars had they not been lent to Washington.

In his 1848 essay "What Is Seen and What Is Not Seen," French economist Frédéric Bastiat termed this the "broken window" fallacy, in reference to a local myth that breaking windows would stimulate the economy by creating window-repair jobs. Today, the broken-window fallacy explains why thousands of new stimulus jobs are not improving the total employment picture.

Keynesian economists counter that redistribution can increase demand if the money is transferred from savers to spenders. Yet this "idle savings" theory assumes that savings fall out of the economy, which clearly is not the case. Nearly all individuals and businesses invest their savings or put it in banks (which in turn invest it or lend it out)—so the money is still being spent somewhere in the economy. Even in this recession, with tightened lending standards, banks are performing their traditional role of intermediating between those who have savings and those who need to borrow. They are not building extensive basement vaults to hoard cash.

Any government spending that increases production at factories and puts unemployed individuals to work will be financed by removing funds elsewhere in the economy.

Since the financial system transfers savings into investment spending, the only savings that drop out of the economy are those dollars literally hoarded in mattresses and safes—and there is no evidence that this is occurring en masse. And even if individuals, businesses, and banks did distrust the financial system enough to hoard their dollars, why would they suddenly lend them to the government to finance a stimulus bill?

Once the idle-savings theory collapses, so does all the intellectual support for government spending as stimulus. If there are no idle savings to acquire, then the government is merely borrowing purchasing power from one part of the economy and moving it into another part of the economy. Washington becomes nothing more than a pricey middleman, redistributing existing demand.

Even foreign borrowing is no free lunch. Before China can lend us dollars, it must acquire them from us. This requires either attracting American investment or raising the Chinese trade surplus (and the American trade deficit). The balance of payments between America and other nations must eventually net out to zero, which means government spending funded from foreign borrowing is zero-sum.

I've purposely ignored the Federal Reserve, which actually can inject cash into the economy, but not in a way that constitutes stimulus. Congress can deficit-spend; Treasury can finance the deficit spending by issuing bonds; and the Federal Reserve can buy those bonds by printing money. Any economic boost is then due to the Federal Reserve's actions, not the deficit spending—and of course the Federal Reserve will have to raise interest rates, slowing the economy again, to bring the resulting inflation under control.

If government spending doesn't cause economic growth, what does? Growth happens when more goods and services are produced, and the only true source of this is an expanding labor force combined with high productivity. High productivity in turn requires educated and motivated workers, advanced technology, adequate infrastructure, physical capital such as factories and tools, and the rule of law.

Government spending could boost long-run productivity through investments in education and infrastructure—but only if politicians could target those investments better than the private sector would. And it turns out that politicians cannot outsmart the marketplace. Mountains of academic studies show that government spending generally reduces long-term productivity.

Furthermore, most government programs that could increase productivity don't work fast enough to counteract a recession. Education spending cannot raise productivity until its student beneficiaries graduate and enter the work force. It can take more than a decade to build new highways and bridges.

The only policy proven to increase productivity in the short term is to lower tax rates and reduce regulation. Businesses can grow only through consistent investment and an expanding, skilled workforce. Cutting marginal tax rates promotes these conditions, by creating incentives to work, save, and invest.

It's happened before. In 1981, President Reagan inherited an economy stagnating under the weight of 70 percent marginal income-tax rates. Under Reagan, the top rate fell to 28 percent, and the subsequent surge in investment and labor supply created the strongest 25-year economic boom in American history.

Such tax-rate reductions are superior to tax rebates designed to "put money in people's pockets." Rebates—like government spending—simply redistribute existing dollars. They don't increase productivity because they don't change incentives: No one has to work, save, or invest more to get a tax rebate. The 2001 and 2008 rebates failed because Congress borrowed money from investors and foreigners and redistributed it to families. Not surprisingly, any new personal-consumption spending was matched by corresponding declines in investment spending and net exports, and the economy remained stagnant.

If conservatives wish to provide economic leadership, they must get this argument right. The stimulus is not failing because it is too small or because too much of it is being saved. It's failing because Congress can only redistribute existing demand, not create new demand. This recession will eventually end. The more serious, long-term danger is that President Obama's Europeanization of the economy will bring the same slow growth, stagnant wages, job losses, high taxes, and lack of competitiveness that have plagued Western Europe, leaving the United States at an ever-growing disadvantage with Asian countries not so afflicted.

To prevent this, conservatives and free marketeers will need to promote policies that support long-term prosperity. The first step will be articulating why big government does not bring economic growth. **NR**

REVENGE OF THE Castle People

Reagan and Thatcher revived the principles of the marketplace. Can we restore its culture?

BY MICHAEL KNOX BERAN

RELATIONS between the aristocrat and the common man have never been easy. The antipathy between castle people, who dwell in the manor house, and agora people, children of the marketplace, runs like a fault line through the moral landscape of the West. The chasm is already evident in the *Iliad*, in the thrashing Odysseus gives Thersites; Proust, in the 20th century, was as conscious of the gulf when he insisted that the "misunderstanding" between the upper castes and their bourgeois inferiors was "complete."

The marketplace came out on top. Democracy vanquished feudalism. Or so we like to pretend: There are suburbs of New York and Philadelphia in which you might, with only a slight exertion of imagination, fancy yourself in the world of the medieval dukes. The persistence of castle culture is one of the curiosities of the country's social archaeology, another of the cultural contradictions of capitalism, if not of democracy itself. The Gilded Age robber barons, living in fear of the industrialized masses, built neo-Romanesque castles like the Hay-Adams houses (since demolished) on Washington's Lafayette Square. The thicker the masonry, the more likely the fortress would withstand the anticipated Jacquerie. Later, a more confident generation of castle people found inspiration in the vanilla-ice-cream neoclassicism of Cass Gilbert and John Russell Pope. The 1980s brought the first prefabricated McMansions.

Just now a fresh breed of castle builders is spawning, ready to replace the fallen castellans who earned their turrets on Wall Street and built their McCastles during the credit bubble, but whose ideal of the financier-sage has, in the light of the Crash, come to seem dubious. Robert Rubin and Hank Paulson, dragon-slayers of this now-defunct castle romance, are giving way to a different species of aristocrat, the administrative "czars" who are rising to power in Washington and London.

The newly ascendant castle people are closer in their politics to the New Deal mandarins of the 1930s than they are to the financial wizards of the last two decades. But however egalitarian their rhetoric, the new castle people, like their predecessors, will almost certainly conform to the proprieties of castledom. They will set themselves up in gaudy châteaux in prosperous suburbs, will send their children to private schools done up in revived Gothic, and will not probably refuse invitations to appear in America's stud book, the *Social Register*. President

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Obama sends his daughters to Sidwell Friends, the most exclusive school in the capital, while Michelle Obama, who was rumored to look coldly on Britain on account of the Empire, has become a pal of Queen Elizabeth. Not far from the Palace, a host of Labour MPs, who in theory carry on the tradition of Jack Cade and Wat Tyler, have fudged their expense accounts in pursuit of chauffeur-driven cars, Farrow & Ball wallpaper, and insurance for antiques.

That those who rhetorically oppose the privileges of the castle should covet its little vanities is on the whole good. Such hypocrisy preserves the equilibrium of society. It is not pleasant to see empty beer cans lying on the roadside, but the prospect brightens when you find that many of them today are brands of *light* beer. The good old boy, unashamed to toss his empties out of the pick-up, frets over his beer belly, with its low-caste bulge. He covertly aspires to the slenderness of the underfed, tofu-chewing upper crust. By a similar paradox the most hardened progressive will join a fancy club, sail his yacht in regattas, and even flirt with polo, as Ted Kennedy did before old Joe shook his head. Humble or great, each of us cherishes his little theory of distinction. The stability of society depends on this weakness in our natures—on people who, however populist their sentiments, have a little place in their souls where Jay Gatsby spits in the democratic well from which he drinks.

For a complete overthrow of the aristocratic element in society would be a catastrophe. The castle was born in crude strength, and was at first merely an instrument of power, and perhaps a kind of wooing plumage. But over time it became a civilizing force. Castle people, at their best, smooth the rough edges of life. They refine its pleasures. The threshold problem of existence, Evelyn Waugh observed, is not wealth, or health, or even death, but boredom. Waugh's portrait of Hooper, the uncultured plebeian in *Brideshead Revisited*, is unfair. Yet just about everyone who reads the book sympathizes, not with Hooper the everyman, but with the Flyte-Marchmains, the aristocratic exceptions, the sensuous vanquishers of drabness. In vain did Edmund Wilson argue that "Waugh's snobbery, hitherto held in check by his satirical point of view, has here emerged shameless and rampant." Hooper is a bore. The Marchmains are fun. They have behind them centuries of practice in the art of killing time tastefully, an art no civilization can do without.

THE problem is not that castle culture thrives in a democratic soil, but that it thrives too abundantly. Its growth, Dickens showed, has come at the expense of another, no less valuable plant. Dickens was struck by the way common folk in his day, whose heritage was the village and the market square, so often set up, in suburban plots, as squires and knights errant. In *Great Expectations*, he depicts Wemmick, a clerk, getting up his cottage as a castle, complete with turret, drawbridge, and Gothic windows. This castle culture, Dickens makes clear, was very different from that of the village in which Pip, the book's hero, grows up, with its civic and communal atmosphere. But communities like Pip's, Dickens saw, were fast disappearing. Where the communal cords have snapped, where the market square has become a strange and bewildering place, where one no longer knows, or trusts, one's neighbor, one will prefer, as Wemmick does, the security of the suburban keep. And not merely its physical security: In the vast, impersonal metropolis, the exclusive house, the exclusive school, the exclusive club offer spiritual security, a means of distinguishing oneself from the crowd.

What was in danger of being lost, Dickens believed, was the common culture of the market square, the *agora* that goes back to the Greeks. If the castle has from time out of mind been the seat of aristocratic culture, the marketplace was once the crucible of a no less vital culture of the common man. The standard was pretty high: If the aristocrats had the heroic poetry of their epic bards, the agora people had their tragic poets, whose dramas were initially staged in the Athenian agora, and more recently in Shakespeare's Globe in Southwark. The Greek marketplace that inspired the *Oresteia* was succeeded by a Gothic one that midwifed Chartres and *The Divine Comedy*; this medieval marketplace, in turn, gave way to a Renaissance one, the agora-piazza of Michelangelo and Leonardo.

Theognis said of the common people, "They have no tradition." He was wrong. They have the agora. Unlike castle culture, agora culture is inclusive. No one is turned away. The Athenians called the late morning and noontide the time of the "full agora" (*agora plethousa*), a time when citizens are "in good agora form." The expression comes from the Greek verb *agorazein*, a word "not to be translated by one word of any other language," the historian Jacob Burckhardt wrote. "Dictionaries give *to traffic in the market place*, *to buy*, *to talk*, *to deliberate*, etc., but cannot reproduce the combination of business and conversation mingled with delightful loafing and standing around together" that the Greek word conveys. In the Gothic marketplace, Erwin Panofsky said, "the priest and the layman, the poet and the lawyer, the scholar and the artisan could get together on terms of near-equality." In the Renaissance piazza, Walter Pater wrote, artists, philosophers, and men of action "do not live in isolation, but breathe a common air, and catch light and heat from each other's thoughts."

Much of what is democratic in the culture of the West is closely connected to the life of these civic focal points. Go to the Place de la Maison Carrée in Nîmes, or the Piazza del Campo in Siena, or the Place de la Comédie in Montpellier, or any of a thousand lesser forums, and you find, in the buildings, the statues, the paintings, a sort of civic jewel box. And this plastic art is but the remnant of a more comprehensive artistry: It is a skeleton that, in its prime, was clothed by music and poetry. The rhythms and harmonies of the plastic art of the marketplace were reinforced by those of the choral hymnody and dramatic verse, the folk ballads and folk dances, which once brought the civic space to life (and still do, in out-of-the-way places like Dalmatia and eastern Crete).

No civilization, even the most bovine, can entirely do without this cathartic machinery. Aristotle credited the poetry of the agora with forming the character of citizens and easing the psychic burdens of common life. Modern scientists have only now begun to catch up with him. They speculate that music and gossip, the lifeblood of the marketplace, meet a human need. Anthropologist Robin Dunbar supposes that music, language, and gossip evolved as "vocal grooming" tools in early hominid groups which had grown too large to rely on touchy-feely grooming techniques to promote cohesion. If Dunbar is right, Virgil and Theocritus were on to something when they made their shepherds use poetry as a grooming tool and music as a means of keeping their flocks together. Plato applied the same pastoral insight to the grooming of citizens. If the herdsman is "the master of the music best suited to his herd," so the agora culture of the polis perfected the music best suited to the human flock that constitutes the community.

THE civic focal point, the central institution of marketplace culture, has for some time been dying, dying even as the democratic man its culture nurtured has gained his victories over aristocracy. The poetry that brought coherence to the market square, a poetry that had its place both in the market square's grammar school and in its dramatic and liturgical art, no longer animates the West's public spaces. A rapid growth in population and a vast expansion of commerce overwhelmed the old centers. At the same time the rise of the nation-state and its metropolitan elites made the provincial agoras seem, well, provincial. The provinces, Tocqueville wrote, "had come under the thrall of the metropolis, which attracted to itself all that was most vital in the nation." The traditional patrons of agora culture, the merchant princes who were once proud of their market squares, abandoned them to ape the gentry. The man of business found it infra dig to live near his shop; he built himself a mansion in a fashionable aristocratic district. New technology further diminished the appeal of the old forums as people turned to radio, cinema, and television for amusement.

Even so, the civic focal point might have survived if people had cared about it. But the rationale was forgotten. During the last few centuries the traditional artistry of the marketplace has come to seem merely quaint and even irrational. Modern planners who studied the old market squares failed to see, beneath a surface of heterogeneous activity, the unity of a civic whole. They sneered at a space in which people ate and drank, shopped and prayed, worked and played together in the shadow of a unifying art; such a forum was not, for them, an instance of coherent poetic form but (in the words of Lewis Mumford) "an amateurish combination of simple undifferentiated space and functions."

The novelists who composed the agora's epitaph saw that something more than a method of organizing civic space was being lost. So too was an art of forming civic character. Monseigneur Myriel in Hugo's *Les Misérables*, Alyosha in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, and Josiah Crawley in Trollope's *The Last Chronicle of Barset* are the successors of the good shepherds who figure in the agora art of Sophocles and Euripides. These pastoral characters, kindly and sensible, ministered to young people, as Alyosha ministers to Ilyusha in Dostoevsky's book, and they helped strayed souls, as Monseigneur Myriel helps Jean Valjean in Hugo's novel.

DOMENICO IL QUAGLIO/BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY/GETTY

But already in the 19th century the pastoral sages began to seem archaic. So did the grooming tools thy used. Liturgies were revised and degraded; the poetic initiation rites of the grammar school were abolished. The guardians of civic life looked to the social sciences to make up for the loss of this pastoral tuition. When Disraeli, Bismarck, and Roosevelt established their social-welfare regimes, their lieutenants drew on the new social techniques to minister to their post-agora charges, much as their successors would draw on the planning ideals of Le Corbusier. Whatever the virtues of these methods, they were easily abused. In *The Human Condition*, her 1958 defense of agora culture, Hannah Arendt argued that, as a result of the replacement of agora methods by those of sociologists, psychologists, and planners, man's civic capacities were being diminished. The new "behavioral sciences," Arendt concluded, were subtly authoritarian, and if unchecked would eventually "reduce man as a whole, in all his activities, to the level of a conditioned and behaving animal." In socializing away man's "anti-social" tendencies, the masters of the new social mystique nurtured, not independent citizens, but passive conformists who would more easily acquiesce in the social-planning mandate.

Like Arendt, another New York intellectual, Lionel Trilling, believed that the post-agora faith in social progress concealed a desire for control. In his 1947 novel *The Middle of the Journey*, Trilling makes Gifford Maxim, a character modeled on Whittaker Chambers, unmask the "hope of power" that drove the post-agora prophets of "society and social justice and sociology" to promulgate a new code of castle prerogatives, a bureaucratic ethos that, like the old feudal one, had its coercive sting. The more we talk of welfare, Maxim argues, the crueler we become. Even where modern administrative elites have not (like the socialists of Russia and Germany) used cruelty to manipulate behavior, their programs have perpetuated what Trilling called a "facile sociological" point of view that undermines the higher forms of human flourishing. As the agora shepherd gives way to the post-agora guidance counselor, as the civic focal point ceases to transmit culture, the cruder democratic personality Waugh associated with Hooper comes to the fore.

It is precisely when the marketplace ceases to groom citizens that the castle becomes a threat. For there is then very little to prevent the castle people, whether seigneurial or bureaucratic, from having their way. Kafka's *The Castle* is among other things a meditation on how a renovated castle culture, with all the resources of modern bureaucracy at the disposal of its "Control Authorities," humbles the common people of the village. The villagers come to worship the castle people much as the landlady in Kafka's book adores the castle functionary Klamm, or as the Brangwen women in Lawrence's *The Rainbow* adore the squire's lady at Shelly Hall.

RONALD REAGAN and Margaret Thatcher restored the marketplace as an economic ideal. They did not revive its historic culture. Liberals have done no better. Though he exalts community, the liberal is skeptical of the agora; he is suspicious of association that lessens the individual's reliance on the state. In his 1953 book *The Quest for Community*, Robert Nisbet showed how "intermediate associations" such as families, neighborhoods, and places of worship—prime constituents of agora culture—have been gradually undermined by progressive statism and the intrusive regulatory machinery of ever nosier elites. No less crippling are the liberal's artistic inclinations. Being a child of Rousseau, the liberal believes, deep down, that progress can be made only after the old artistic forms—the corrupt and archaic poetries of the past—are overthrown. He wants to make a community from moral and aesthetic scratch.

Can conservatives do better? The only hope of regeneration, it seems to me, lies in experiments in civic artistry undertaken by philanthropists eager to refurbish the culture of the marketplace. One thinks of Poundbury, the little city, rich in civic focal points, that the Prince of Wales commissioned the architect Léon Krier to build in Dorset. Poundbury has attracted a good deal of attention, and it and the model towns of such "new urbanist" architects as Andrés Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk might conceivably inspire a broader civic movement, much as Thoreau's experiment at Walden Pond inspired the environmental movement. Most people today recognize the importance of conserving natural resources, though naturally they differ concerning the means. A time may come when people will insist as passionately on the necessity of conserving cultural resources.

But people must first be persuaded that the agora can give them satisfactions they now associate with the castle. At present the castle is the only instance of a higher manner, a more generous standard of cultivation, conveniently to hand. From the fake Gothic parapets of Princeton to the fake castellated towers of Yale, from the prep school to the summer resort, castle spirit monopolizes much of what is attractive in the culture. It has become the main source, not merely of tone and breeding, but of that urbanity that comes with large perspectives and knowledge of the world. Liberal-arts colleges come to resemble finishing schools, imparting just enough of the old aristocratic culture to make their charges clubbable. Even if you yourself have no interest in the character-molding conventions of the castle, you wonder whether they will not smooth a path for your children. And however much you admire the democracy of the agora, you find it not easy to refute Waugh's argument that, if you want to escape the inanities of popular culture, you must forsake the *vin ordinaire* and drink claret with castle people.

Flaubert's diagnosis of the problem is as cogent as ever. His homage, in *Salammbô*, to the agora culture of Carthage, with its domes, its obelisks, its voluptuous mysticisms, is overdrawn, but for all that, the city is alive in a way that Yonville-l'Abbaye, the marketplace in *Madame Bovary*, is not. We succumb to castle fever, Flaubert suggests, in part because the alternative agora tradition is dead, and we cannot bring ourselves to believe that it ever lived. "Civic" is for us a synonym for "dull." What Milton called the "mirth, high cheer, and wine" of life seems to us to be concentrated in the castle. Emma Bovary dreams of Scottish lords and Parisian duchesses. She falls in love with a landowner whose hair curls like Lord Byron's. Yet Emma is not a fool. "Madame Bovary," Flaubert said, "*c'est moi.*" Both he and his most famous character would have fared better, he implied, had there been in their time another path to culture and pleasure.

It is just possible that experiments in the Poundbury line will convince people that a renovated agora can be the other path. Such experiments would, to be sure, have to go beyond Poundbury in recreating, not merely a style of civic design, but the pastoral grooming culture Aristotle thought essential to civic life. Conservatives ought in principle to be sympathetic to such a quest. There is in the autonomous character, commercial vibrancy, and Burkean artistry of the traditional marketplace a good deal to attract them.

To infuse new life into the agora, conservatives will need to enlist the energies of people they long ago stopped talking to, but who will be necessary to any effort to revive the poetic-grooming side of the market square. There is a certain kind of person who, like Jude Fawley in Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, fulfills his nature in the adornment of a community. When the civic focal point thrived, these artists had a place in the community and a means of getting bread. They carved the stone, frescoed the walls, painted the ceilings, gilded the domes, composed the masques and harlequinades. But the agora in which they might once have become absorbed is gone. They are today rebels without a cause, misfits who dine off grant money and alienation from the marketplace, and create art that is generally faithful to the solipsistic bleakness of their situation. A conservative philosophy of civic renewal could give them the transfiguring work they need.

Successful civic movements begin, not in the social tinkering of castle people, but in the mobilization of creative personality. Athens, Venice, and Florence exist because the requisite passions were there mobilized in the refinement of the civic focal point. The result was a thriving marketplace, a common agora culture that was neither stupid nor dull, just the kind conservatives should favor today. **NR**

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The Long View

BY ROB LONG

Transcript: *Larry King Live*, Sept. 7, 2012

LARRY KING: From Paterson, New Jersey! Hello!

CALLER: Hi, Larry. I'd like to ask your guest if he ever gets mad when people call it a "death panel."

LARRY KING: Great question. What about it? It's a panel. You talk about death. People are gonna call it what they call it, you know?

IMAC COMMISSIONER: Of course, Larry, and we're cognizant of that. But I think a better way to put what we do is to use the proper name—we're an independent medical advisory council. That's all we do. We advise. We advise doctors. It's really very simple. It's not like we're empowered to do anything other than that. It's not like we can say to your caller—what's your name, by the way?

CALLER: Mine? Michelle.

IMAC COMMISSIONER: And where do you live?

CALLER: In New Jersey.

IMAC COMMISSIONER: And how old are you?

CALLER: I'm 47.

IMAC COMMISSIONER: Okay, it's not like we can say to Michelle from New Jersey that because she is past her socially useful age and lives in a heavily polluted state and the likelihood that she'll contract cancer is higher than average that we'll cut off her health insurance and just let her die. That's crazy. That's silly. We aren't authorized to do that.

CALLER: Actually, I had a squamous-cell carcinoma removed last year.

IMAC COMMISSIONER: Oh. Then we *are* authorized to do that.

CALLER: But it's totally gone. No recurrence.

IMAC COMMISSIONER: Right, right. Still. What's your street address?

LARRY KING: Government in action! This is not your father's post office! From Concord, California! Hello!

CALLER: Hi Larry. I'd like to ask the commissioner if they take any other criteria into the decision-making process. Like, last year I donated the maximum individual amount to the Obama reelection campaign, and this year I was told by my IMAC counselors that because I'm still a few pounds overweight I'm in danger of being humanely euthanized if I'm ever hospitalized.

LARRY KING: Put to sleep! Like a stray dog! Doesn't seem right.

IMAC COMMISSIONER: No, it doesn't. I'm sorry, caller, but you say you're a few pounds overweight?

CALLER: Correct.

IMAC COMMISSIONER: How many is a few?

CALLER: Eighty.

LARRY KING: Garlique! Try it for heart health today!

IMAC COMMISSIONER: Well, okay, there's not much I can do about that. Your best bet is to continue to make regular contributions.

LARRY KING: Diet? Exercise?

IMAC COMMISSIONER: Oh, right. Of course that too. And she could think about bundling.

LARRY KING: Tomorrow night! The cast of *Saved by the Bell* remembers Mr. Belding! Meanwhile, let's get serious. I've had 43 heart attacks. I've got more holes in me than a mob boss after a hit. Just this morning I had another small heart attack and I'm supposed to have a very minor bypass on Friday, after the show. Shirley Jones, by the way! The whole hour! So I used to pay it all out of pocket until we went to that other system where I've got to bring a book when I have a doctor's appointment.

IMAC COMMISSIONER: The single-payer system, right.

LARRY KING: Single-payer!

IMAC COMMISSIONER: And this surgery has been approved?

LARRY KING: I think so.

IMAC COMMISSIONER: Really? How old are you, Larry?

LARRY KING: Technically, I'm 93.

IMAC COMMISSIONER: Wow. Hard to see how your panel approved that surgery.

LARRY KING: I think it's because I'm in the "arts" category.

IMAC COMMISSIONER: Could be. I'll look into it. Doesn't seem like "arts" is exactly the right way to describe what you do.

LARRY KING: Does it weigh on you? The stress? The responsibility?

IMAC COMMISSIONER: Not really, Larry. Look, I used to be a college admissions officer, so I'm used to evaluating people based on their potential, their intelligence, their diversity—

LARRY KING: Diversity! America's strength!

IMAC COMMISSIONER: I agree totally, Larry.

LARRY KING: From Santa Cruz, California! Hello!

CALLER: Hi Larry. I'd like to ask your guest if he's ever had to pull the plug on a loved one?

LARRY KING: Great question! So? Didya ever? Just say to Mom or Dad or Sis, "Hey, sorry, it's aloha on a steel guitar?"

IMAC COMMISSIONER: Larry, really, we don't pull the plug on anyone, ever. We aren't allowed to do that, constitutionally. The Supreme Court in *Jerry Lewis* v. *IMAC* was very, very clear. What we do is guide, Larry. We guide. We shape a conversation and we create a dialogue and we guide a framework for a productive discussion about these very very difficult and emotional issues.

LARRY KING: But who actually pulls the plug?

IMAC COMMISSIONER: Usually the nurse, when no one is looking.

LARRY KING: This weekend! After my surgery! The cast of *Desperate Housewives*!

IMAC COMMISSIONER: Um, Larry, about this weekend. I wouldn't make any plans . . .

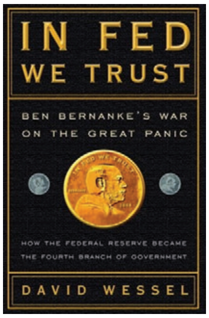
LARRY KING: From Walland, Tennessee! Hello!

IMAC COMMISSIONER: Seriously, Larry, don't buy any green bananas.

Books, Arts & Manners

Bernanke's War

KEVIN D. WILLIAMSON



In Fed We Trust: Ben Bernanke's War on the Great Panic: How the Federal Reserve Became the Fourth Branch of Government, by David Wessel (Crown, 323 pp., $26.99)

David Wessel's new volume on the Federal Reserve's response to the financial crisis is the sort of book that Bob Woodward usually writes about U.S. presidents: a character-driven, sometimes novelistic, You Are There account of highly driven, high-performing, high-testosterone men who stay up late eating ham sandwiches during world-shaking crises. It analyzes the choices they made and the creeds that led them to those choices.

At the heart of this story are the "Four Musketeers," Federal Reserve chairman Ben Bernanke and his three-man brain trust: Kevin Warsh, the wunderkind investment banker who was the youngest Fed governor in history; Treasury veteran Tim Geithner, who ran the powerful New York Fed; and Don Kohn, Alan Greenspan's understudy. Bernanke is a lifelong scholar of the Great Depression. Geithner was one of Treasury's point men handling the serial Asian and Latin American financial crises in the 1990s. Kohn had been the Fed's director of monetary affairs and, having risen through the ranks under Paul Volcker and Greenspan, commanded vast knowledge of the institution's subtle relationship with the markets and the world economy. Warsh had been a hugely successful Wall Street player and had worked on the Bush administration's efforts to reform Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the government-backed mortgage giants at the center of the crisis.

Nor did the four men's academic background leave much to be desired: Bernanke has an economics doctorate from MIT and chaired the economics department at Princeton; Kohn has a Ph.D. in economics from Michigan, Geithner a master's in the field from Johns Hopkins; Warsh had abandoned his economics Ph.D. studies at Stanford to attend Harvard Law School.

Given a blank sheet of paper and a mandate to write down the names of four people who might guide the nation through a great financial upheaval involving subprime mortgages, related securities, investment banks, and the broader financial markets, a wise man might have chosen these four. So why did they so often give the impression that they didn't know what they were doing?

Or maybe a better question is one posed by Wessel: Did Bernanke keep his promise to Milton Friedman? Bernanke, at an event honoring the great economist, had famously declared: "Regarding the Great Depression—you're right, we did it. We're very sorry. But, thanks to you, we won't do it again." In that earlier case, the Fed had severely tightened credit, and thus turned a recession into a depression. As of this writing, we haven't entered a new Great Depression. But that seems a low bar to clear. Are we to declare victory in Bernanke's War on those grounds alone?

Wessel's answer to these questions is not entirely satisfactory. In his telling, the Fed's mission is twofold: First comes the substance, the actions and policies of the Fed, and then comes the theater, the institution's sometimes ham-fisted attempts to communicate its strategy and intentions to the markets. Wessel is generous, perhaps overly generous, to the Four Musketeers on the substance question, and the strongest criticism he has to offer is that, in retrospect, it appears that they could have been faster and stronger in their reaction. "But there is another side to the what-if game," he writes. "What if Ben Bernanke had not been a student of the Great Depression? What if he had not resolved to do whatever it takes to prevent a second Great Depression? What if he had been timid or cowed by the resistance inside the Fed? Those questions are easier to answer: The economy would have been even worse than it is now, and this book would have been an account of how the Fed had dithered and delayed, as an earlier generation of central bankers had." Reasonably strong on the policy, then, in Wessel's judgment, but often clumsy on the theater, misjudging how investors and financial institutions at home and abroad would react to the many skirmishes and engagements undertaken by General Bernanke's brigades.

Wessel is an economics editor at the *Wall Street Journal*, and his understanding of the issues at hand is, as one might expect, broad and deep—truly impressive. It is also entirely conventional. His history of the Great Panic inevitably introduces the question of whether effective regulation of the financial markets is possible, but he engages with that question in only the lightest and most oblique manner. Consider that many of the more exotic financial instruments that have played a role in this crisis exist in no small part as a reaction to preceding regulatory conditions.

For instance, credit-default swaps were created as a substitute for conventional bond insurance, and grew to be preferred to conventional forms of insurance because they were not subject to the same regulation and attendant costs. The bond-ratings cartel, a federally chartered oligopoly that put its collective stamp of approval on a lot of subprime slime, exists only because of federal regulation. Capital is fungible, and financial innovation will always move faster than financial regulation—and innovation will always react to regulation; dump rocks in the river, the water will flow around them. Rather than ask whether Bernanke kept his promise to Friedman, might we not instead ask whether it was even plausible for him to make such a promise in the first instance?

Though Wessel's very fine reporting suggests this question repeatedly, he does not quite tackle it. Instead, he writes sentences such as these: "Bernanke and

Geithner simply never imagined that things could get so bad, that the crises they would confront would be so much larger than the worst of those that Greenspan had imagined. . . . To the officials overseeing the economy and many others, a crisis as big and broad as the Great Panic simply wasn't considered a plausible scenario—and they weren't preparing for anything this large." If we cannot rely upon a man who is both chairman of the Federal Reserve and a scholar of the Great Depression to imagine the scope of a great financial crisis, whom might we rely upon to do so? The question sinks like a rock beneath the thrillingly choppy waters of Wessel's narrative.

Nonetheless, Wessel's story is an interesting and critically important one, told with great skill and wit. *In Fed We Trust* contains much that will be of interest to guys with Bloomberg terminals on their desks but also is well within the reach of the well-informed citizen at large. Financial terms and concepts are deftly explained in passing in a way that neither condescends to the general reader nor punishes him for not having had his nose buried in the eight-point type at the back of the *Financial Times* for the past decade. The story is full of fascinating anecdotes. One of the best: When he was being considered for the Fed job, Bernanke was brought into Vice President Cheney's office for a 90-minute interview. One of the questions: What would you do if the CEO of Citigroup telephoned and said his bank was in trouble? It wasn't long afterward that Bernanke had to answer that question non-theoretically. (His real-world solution: Buy it.)

The Fed has long been a despised fixation among those on the fringes of U.S. politics. It has more mythology surrounding it than does Mount Olympus. Wessel's account of its creation and early days is a brilliant history-in-miniature of central banking in the United States, covering J. P. Morgan's freelance bailout of the banking system during the Panic of 1907, and touching on the ideas of Walter Bagehot, the intellectual godfather of central banking, with lucid prose combining brevity with eye-catching detail. Like bad blood, the stink of politics hangs over the Fed's birth, a fact that shows itself in sometimes amusing ways. Among the three men Woodrow Wilson appointed to draw up the boundaries of the Federal Reserve banks was, of all people, the secretary of agriculture—then as now, the farm lobby always got its say. Likewise, the Federal Reserve System's infrastructure has not evolved with American demographics, which is why there are two Fed banks in Missouri alone but only two in the west, in Dallas and in San Francisco. There are no Federal Reserve banks in the nation's second- and fourth-largest cities (Los Angeles and Houston) but former powers such as Richmond and Kansas City host them.

Wessel headlines the creation of the Fed "Alexander Hamilton Prevails—Ultimately," but also notes: "The host of politically expedient compromises created a flawed institution." How flawed? The Fed helped turn a normal recession into the Great Depression through interest-rate hikes in 1928 and 1929. That costly error resulted from "a misguided attack on speculation in the stock market." I'd keep that phrase "misguided attack on speculation" handy as the solons in Congress prepare to draw and quarter short-sellers or whichever class of investors draws the short straw in the villain-of-the-day lottery.

If the Fed is, as Wessel argues, effectively the fourth branch of government, what does its constitution look like? It looks like the stock chart of Citigroup. Wessel uses a narrative device, "Bernanke's Dashboard," to check in, from time to time, with the data that grounded the Fed chairman's decisions. On Bernanke's Dashboard: the Dow Jones Industrial Average, the market capitalization of Citigroup, the price of oil, the unemployment rate, the Fed funds rate, and the Financial Stress Indicator. Between Aug. 7, 2007, and Dec. 11, 2008, Citigroup lost 81.5 percent of its value and unemployment went up 2.1 percentage points. Oil fell by 40 percent and the DJIA by 35 percent. Sobering stuff—but worth the cost of all that was done to contain the damage? Wessel cannot answer the question; it is unanswerable.

The greatest service Wessel performs here is that his readers very likely will close the book with less confidence in our federal institutions than they had when they opened it. That is a good thing, because, on the evidence, these institutions should not inspire all that much confidence. The financial crisis and the government reaction (and overreaction) to it is a story that is critical to understanding the current state of political affairs. Citizens have a duty to understand it; Wessel's *In Fed We Trust* is a useful and enjoyable way to discharge that duty. **NR**

THE PURE GIFT

In Memoriam LME

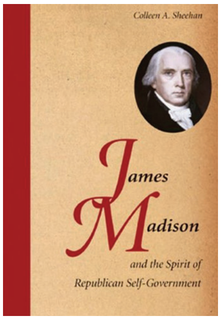
On the hottest day that summer, a rainbow
Arced over the clock-tower of the brick pile
We call The Rotunda, a dying shopping mall
With a wilting grocery, a druggist, a flower stall,
A dozen half-lit vacant retail stores
And a crafts gallery. I had just bought
A jewel box, the lid a parquet braid
Of spruce and rosewood artfully inlaid,
With a comb of music teeth to play a tune
For one who might never open it to listen.

There is a clear-cut purity in the gift
Purchased with love that may not be returned.
I walked out into twilight holding the treasure
The clerk had gift-wrapped in white paper
And bound with ribbons, silver and turquoise
All cunningly curled. Then I looked up
And saw the rainbow against the violet sky
Late in the rainless day, bold and unbidden.
No gold anchors the generous bridge of heaven.

—DANIEL MARK EPSTEIN

Madison And Public Reason

BRADLEY C. S. WATSON



James Madison and the Spirit of Republican Self-Government, by Colleen A. Sheehan (Cambridge, 224 pp., $22.99)

MANY myths surround and obfuscate the American Founding. One is that the Founders and the Constitution they created had a peculiarly modern and atomistic view of society. According to this myth, the Founders concerned themselves not with the formation of citizens engaged in a common enterprise, but with institutions that played individuals and interest groups off against one another in order to prevent the dominance of one or another faction. Another myth, invented and perpetuated by progressives, suggests that the Founders (and Madison in particular) were guilty of anti-democratic elitism. And still another relies on the more positive but still distorting label of aristocracy.

Colleen Sheehan's bold new book provides a corrective to the many myths of the Founding. It portrays James Madison, the father of the Constitution, as a man deeply concerned with the ideas of civic virtue, citizen character, and common purpose, albeit in the service of the truly republican principles of the Declaration of Independence. The book is about what Sheehan calls "the unbroken chain of ideas" that led from the Declaration to the Constitution and beyond.

Madison was well aware that even the cleverest institutional mechanisms are no substitute for the primary check on government: respectable public opinion. The spirit of a regime—that which gives force and direction to its fixed constitutional principle—is manifested and communicated in such opinion. The distinction between sound and unsound opinion runs throughout the founding debates and is evidenced in the structure of the Constitution itself, and Sheehan shows how consistently it runs through the thought and writings of Madison. Madison "understood his work at the Constitutional Convention of 1787, in the ratification debates, and in the 1790s to be in the service of establishing and vindicating the cause of popular government in America."

The central idea that animated Madison did not change between his contributions to *The Federalist* and his theoretical and party-press writings of the 1790s. That idea was the authority of the people and the sovereignty of informed public opinion. And so in Madison we see clearly the extent to which America is based on far more than the pursuit of self- or class interest. In Madison's thought, writes Sheehan, we see "the idea of America."

Even as Madison took issue with the policies and constitutional vision of the Federalists of the 1790s, he never took issue with *The Federalist*. The importance of maintaining the cool and deliberate sense of the community as a governing force unites Madison's thoughts and actions into a coherent whole. He saw men such as Adams and Hamilton trying to deny this popular sense, with their respective emphases on political balancing and commercial competition supported by national power. Sheehan points out that, unlike Jefferson, Madison rejected the idea of human perfectibility and the inevitability of progress in human knowledge. And yet he was not pessimistic about man's capacity for self-government: If respectable collective opinion were allowed to operate, a free people would be able to control their government and themselves. Madison's perceived theoretical and political shifts from the 1780s to the 1790s were simply the result of his thinking and rethinking the ways in which the reason of the public could be

Mr. Watson is a professor of American and Western political thought at Saint Vincent College in Pennsylvania, and author of Living Constitution, Dying Faith: Progressivism and the New Science of Jurisprudence.

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kept at the forefront of American politics.

Sheehan draws our attention to the important role of the French Enlightenment in Madison's political thought, particularly as it concerned the reign of public opinion in the modern age. This interest led Madison in the 1790s to an important and pointed critique of Montesquieu, as overemphasizing the British idea of class balancing in ensuring moderate government. For Madison, public opinion is not only sovereign, but the primary source of stability in a republican regime. Sheehan skillfully leads the reader through Madison's understanding of a host of French thinkers whose names are unlikely to be familiar to American readers today.

For Madison, America's constitutional safeguards to prevent the concentration of power were to be viewed not as undermining the sovereignty of public opinion, but as shaping and strengthening it as a ruling force. Far from seeking to thwart public opinion, Madison's political thought relied on an elevated conception of what public opinion can and must be in a republican regime. As *Federalist* 10 emphasized the control of factious opinions based on partial and partisan interests, so *Federalist* 14 encouraged the communication of non-factious ideas—and the formation of constitutional majorities—throughout the large republic. The clashing of rival interests is never enough to preserve a republican regime—a fact that, four score and seven years after the Founding, was tragically clear to Americans.

Madison never doubted the fundamental natural truth revealed to the modern mind—that all men are created equal, and that consent to government is therefore a requirement of justice.

A genuine and effective public opinion must rule, and for this conditions must be just right. These conditions include effective transportation routes, free circulation of newspapers, and the flow of ideas between citizens and representatives. Continuous dialogue and deliberation are essential to the construction of proper public opinion. Madison, Sheehan writes, sought "not to depoliticize and anesthetize the opinions and mores of the citizens and replace the expression of different views of justice with shrewd mechanical arrangements, but to provide an environment in which the various views of justice can be expressed, enhanced, and harmonized."

The republic must be large enough to prevent the easy formation of a majority faction. At the same time, it must in effect be contracted by the technologies and institutions of modernity. For Madison, newspapers in particular would serve as vehicles for the transmission of enlightened opinion to citizens, resulting in the refinement and enlargement of public views. As Sheehan's Madison would have it, "Circulating print media serve to communicate the ideas of the educated and patriotic members of society to people at large."

Put another way, Madison never doubted the fundamental natural truth revealed to the modern mind—that all men are created equal, and that consent to government is therefore a requirement of justice. Sheehan points us to the "debt of protection" we owe to the rights of all other citizens, and to which Madison referred in his essay titled "Property," which appeared in the *National Gazette* in 1792. This is a debt that (in Sheehan's formulation) "simultaneously dictates the right of a people to govern themselves and their moral obligation to govern according to a standard of right higher than mere human will."

Natural rights are in principle self-limiting, but the trick is to turn the principle into practice. The maintenance of the natural justice explicit in natural-rights theory requires a political understanding and practice that goes deeper than modern political mechanics. A spirit—a certain kind of citizenry—must be carefully and continuously cultivated, and this depends on understanding the uniquely modern phenomenon of public opinion and its supports. Like Tocqueville after him, Madison understood that the mores of the people are largely determinative of the nature of a regime, and that the democratic age opens up new possibilities and perils.

One of the great insights of this book is therefore that Madison and America itself are at once more modern, and more ancient, than they are traditionally thought to be. Never giving an inch on the truth of natural rights and the utility of the modern, Madison nevertheless transcends the low but none-too-solid foundations of modernity. The classical project, from Madison's point of view, is the formation of a genuine *community* of republican citizens. He therefore deals squarely with the problem of political culture and citizen virtue, and the conditions of their maintenance.

It must be noted that this high view of Madisonian constitutionalism raises questions Sheehan does not answer. She claims that "majority opinion in a republican polity is constantly in the process of constructing itself within an intellectual, moral, and psychological milieu larger than itself." This self-construction demands truly great things from the people because it is civic education without, so to speak, an educator. The people, in order to remain republican, must in large measure be autodidacts. This assumes much, including the existence of an "educated and patriotic" class of men in the press. Nowadays, this class is increasingly one or the other. And the spirit of the polity is itself in doubt (to say the least). What, in short, might Madison think of the regime he did so much to create, and of the efficacy of his ideas concerning its preservation? Sheehan does not set foot in this territory.

This is a serious book that reminds us of the deep debt of gratitude we owe to our Founders, and to Madison in particular. But our debt is not just to the living and the dead. It is to those as yet unborn, a fact of which our Founders were preternaturally aware. Each generation must dedicate itself anew to the terms of our great American compact so that our posterity may enjoy it unsullied, and indeed purified. In this age of doubt, we have great need for works like Sheehan's—books that are at once scholarly and patriotic. **NR**

This Is How It Flops

PETER SUDERMAN

This Is How It Starts, by Grant Ginder
(Simon & Schuster, 288 pp., $14)

GRANT GINDER'S lightly satirical novel about the young, wealthy political set in Washington, D.C., is a shallow, clichéd, and not particularly likable book about shallow, clichéd, and not particularly likable people. This could be the whole point; Ginder has said as much in an interview. But that hardly qualifies as a recommendation of the book, and suggests instead a failure of authorial imagination: It doesn't take an entire novel to make the point that vacuous, self-indulgent people are vacuous and self-indulgent.

The story itself is thin: a bildungsroman plot with a main character who bears a suspicious resemblance to the author. Ginder is a mid-20s speechwriter for the Center for American Progress, a prominent liberal think tank; he grew up in California, graduated from Penn, and interned on the Hill. The book's protagonist, Taylor Mark, is a native Californian with a degree from Penn who finds his way to a Hill office where, eventually, he begins to write brief speeches. From there, Taylor, with the aid of Chase Latham, a well-connected but obnoxious college friend, finds his way into a cliquey band of attractive, moneyed Washingtonians—as well as into the bed of his congressman boss's bombshell wife, Juliana. Unsurprisingly, the fast life proves thrilling but unsustainable.

Ginder's observational prose is often quite sharp—it's the best thing about the book—but his dialogue tends toward the obvious and melodramatic. Characters speak in carefully crafted epigrams, as if on a constant mission to spell out each scene's themes. Toward the end, Chase asks, "Isn't this what this is all about? Finding someone who's done something just *that* much more despicable than you? Shame trumps shame." Intending to teach Taylor a tough life lesson, Juliana leaves him at a bar with the following bit of gritty Washington wisdom: "You can put deceit in diamonds, or you can put it in pearls. But it all looks the same when the lights are off. . . . You're on a sinking ship, Taylor. We both are." By this point, readers, too, will be searching for their life vests.

A host of minor plot holes sink the book even faster. Taylor is portrayed as poor enough to need help paying his rent, but unconcerned enough about money to shell out for $450 loafers and round after round of expensive liquor. And, as an outsider in Chase's world, Taylor has to be taught to dress in all the right brands—a world of luxury to which, prior to coming to Washington, he was oblivious. Yet in his narration, he effortlessly identifies the designers behind what seems like every piece of clothing he spots. (This warmed-over Bret Easton Ellis style might have made more sense had the novel been written from a retrospective point of view, but it's written in the present tense.)

Ginder never seems to be able to decide whether Taylor is a world-weary Washingtonian or—more realistically, given the plot—a D.C. neophyte. After he's spent just a few weeks in town, we find him passing judgment on the city as if he'd lived there a lifetime: "But from what I can tell, this city's got enough deceit." And: "It's the way we work: Upon seeing another man's transgression, the ostensible part of our psyche condemns and berates and tsk-tsks his sins. But that other part, that other voice—the one that gets louder with gin—enrages us with taunts that he's having something we'll never have the courage to touch."

It's hard to buy this sort of lamentation from a character so young and so fresh on the scene, even taking into consideration the city's tendency to attract narcissistic, seen-it-all 24-year-olds. But it fits with a larger problem, which is that Ginder never decides where he wants to go with his tale and therefore peppers it with aimless subplots. Midway through the book, it's revealed that, as a child, Taylor was bullied. Later, pressed to find some inoffensive legislation for his boss to cosponsor after a gaffe, Taylor successfully pushes for a bill on bullying. This allows Ginder to make a few clever jokes about the prefab banality of speechwriting—no doubt gleaned from firsthand experience—but the storyline never goes anywhere.

Mr. Suderman is an associate editor of Reason.

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Still, the subplot provides two things that the rest of the novel lacks: politics and character background. For a novel about Washington's young political elite, this book is surprisingly free of anything resembling actual politics. Characters occasionally identify themselves as Republicans or Democrats, and a few of the Republicans occasionally joke about Democrats' being "Commies," but not once in the novel does anyone claim to have anything like a convicted political belief, much less an ideology. Reading Ginder's novel, one might think the city subsisted on glamorous dinners and discussion of designer fashion and overpriced alcohol. If only! The truth is that D.C.'s social scene is the only one in the country in which it's permissible to go to a bar and have a lengthy, detailed discussion about farm subsidies.

It might be argued by the more cynical among us that, in truth, no one in Washington actually *does* believe in anything. Yet even the city's most disingenuous operators at least claim to believe certain things about policy and governance. In Ginder's Washington, though, such things are an afterthought—and especially so in the case of his protagonist.

Despite more than 250 pages of first-person narration, there's precious little to be said about Taylor Mark. Passive in the extreme, he spends most of the story reacting to or commenting on those around him. But it's never clear what he wants or what he believes. Most young political staffers evince a precarious sense of self—but most also have goals of some sort, as well as particular interests and political beliefs, even if they're not well grounded. Taylor has a dysfunctional family and a degree from Penn, but not much else.

So what's he doing in Washington? For that matter, what are any of the characters—only one of whom seems to have any specific political ambition—doing in the city? They drink, they gossip, they flirt and sleep around. They talk about political people, but almost never about politics. That might make for a more attractive vision of the city, but, as anyone who's spent any time in the city's political corridors can attest, it's wishful thinking. *This Is How It Starts* fails because it makes the mistake of thinking that Washington is a city in which politics is nothing, when the scarier truth is that it's everything. **NR**

Music

In Halls Great and Small

JAY NORDLINGER

Salzburg, Austria

FOUR months ago, I reported in these pages from the Salzburg Easter Festival. Basically a week-long affair, that is a mere bagatelle—a warmup for the main event, namely the summer festival. This festival stretches for five weeks, and features elite musicians from the world over. Elite patrons, too—and economic woes seem not to have stopped them much. The gowns, jewels, and cummerbunds are still in place.

Have a sampler of the festival—beginning with the Vienna Philharmonic, which played a concert one Monday night in the Great Festival Hall. The Vienna Phil. is lord of Salzburg, at least during the summer: They have their residence here. The Berlin Philharmonic is onstage for the Easter Festival.

On this particular Monday night, the big work was the Symphony No. 6 of Bruckner. This is probably the least performed of Bruckner's nine symphonies, along with the Second: and there is no reason for it. It is a masterpiece, with a particularly sublime slow movement, and the Vienna Philharmonic did full justice to it (to the entire symphony, that is). This orchestra is made for Bruckner: with famously rich strings, though strings that can add a growl, when wanted. As for the brass, they are unerring, most of the time, and they are also unblaring: They get volume with no offensiveness whatsoever.

There is simply no weak chair in this orchestra. Just when you think these guys might be a touch overrated, riding on the reputation built up over decades: They're not.

On this occasion, they were led by Esa-Pekka Salonen, the Fabulous Finn, or Flying Finn, or whatever other moniker you may choose. He is, as a rule, a pretty cool customer: brisk, no-nonsense, exact. And these qualities served Bruckner well. Salonen did not do much luxuriating, or any; but there is luxuriating built into the symphony, if I may put it that way. The performance as a whole was tight as a drum—but that slow movement breathed beautifully. The Finale may have been a speck fast, and a speck cold. But that it was stirring, no one can deny.

A few nights later, Patricia Petibon sang a recital in the House for Mozart (as the Little Festival Hall was recently rechristened). Petibon is a French soprano: and this was not a typical recital. No, it was a staged one, a directed one: one with acting and props and so on. Apparently, Petibon thought that a traditional recital was not enough: There needed to be a visual or theatrical element to jazz it up. What a disturbing thought: There is nothing more powerful or "impactful," as moderns say, than a traditional song recital, when ably done.

She began with Rachmaninoff's "Vocalise," during which she slunk around, mysteriously (and comically). After this piece, her accompanist set a metronome in motion; Petibon turned it off. Then some chimes came out, and Petibon was creating New Age effects (or something). She launched a group of Copland songs—actually, some old American songs, arranged by Copland. During "At the River," Petibon stood on a little platform with fake sunflowers in front. This little set was framed by marquee-style lights. When it was time for "Ching-a-ring Chaw," the accompanist donned an Indian headdress. And Petibon took to shootin', like Annie Oakley.

Forgetting the theater, how did she sing? There were moments when I had a wicked thought: "Perhaps she is doing all this other to distract from her singing." She was carelessly free with tempo—maybe she needed that metronome—and too many of her high notes were low (unsupported, thus dipping). But Petibon is a good singer who will have better nights, in addition to less ludicrous ones. Her entire concept is, to me, absurd, pretentious, and unnecessary. This is something the kids in the University of Michigan Music School would have cooked up, in the early 1970s, amid clouds of marijuana smoke. The operafication of a song recital is grotesque. And the constant intrusion of the visual—you could even say the assault of the visual—is a threat to music in general.

Oh, Jay, you might say. *Lighten up. This was just an experiment—a jeu* *d'esprit, not the end of Western civilization.* You may be right. Then again, you may not.

The very next night, in the same house, we had a song recital—a real song recital—by Magdalena Kožená, the Czech mezzo-soprano. She had a high-class (and presumably high-paid) accompanist, Mitsuko Uchida, the veteran concert pianist. Salzburg is a place for such happenings. Kožená was at her best, and that is very good indeed. In varied repertoire, she displayed a wide range of colors and other interpretive necessities. Her concentration never wandered—and as a result, yours didn't either. Her *Frauenliebe und -leben* (Schumann) was a true cycle, not merely a group of disparate songs.

And here is an example of her cosmopolitanism, or adaptability: When she turned to a Debussy set, she was a true French singer. That is musical intelligence, or sympathy. "La Chevelure" is one of the sexiest songs in music. And Kožená sang it with erotic deliciousness. Her first encore was "Der Nussbaum" (again, Schumann), which was also a favorite first encore of Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, who was the supreme singer in Salzburg for years. Kožená sang it both purely and emotionally—a neat trick.

Let me venture into touchy territory—almost verboten territory: Kožená lisped, heavily, throughout the night. In 20 or so hearings, I had never heard her do this. It happens. It makes Purcell's song "Sweeter than Roses," for example, kind of a problem. Last season, I heard Olga Borodina lisp throughout the Verdi Requiem. She had never done that before, in my hearing—she may never again (in my hearing). Writing in her memoirs, Beverly Sills told us that she was subject to fits of lisping. They just came; then they went. One night, while she was lisping, Julius Rudel, in the pit, laughed and laughed—making her, onstage, laugh too.

Anyway, a mystery, this—and, as I said, not really to be talked about.

Care for a dose of opera? Rossini once made a statement about his posterity. He said (something like), "I hope to be survived by Act III of *Otello* [yes, he wrote one too], Act II of *William Tell*—and all of *The Barber*" (*of Seville*). How about *Moïse et Pharaon*, which is to say, *Moses and Pharaoh*? The Salzburg Festival revived it, under the baton of Riccardo Muti, the Italian Stallion. Muti regards this opera as Rossini's greatest work, along with *William Tell*. It is a quirky opinion, but a defensible one.

Eric Cutler in Rossini's Moïse et Pharaon

© CLÄRCHEN BAUS-MATTAR AND MATTHIAS BAUS

And, in the pit, he proved a strong exponent of the work. He conducted with spine, alertness, balance, and energy. There was energy in the executive, as Hamilton might have said. The Vienna Philharmonic played splendidly—though not especially Italianately, did this consummate Bruckner orchestra. A woman can never be too rich or too thin, we hear. Can an orchestra be too rich or burnished in sound? The chorus of the Vienna State Opera performed splendidly too—and Rossini makes the chorus a major player in this opera.

Salzburg had arranged an excellent cast of singers, and I will mention just one: Eric Cutler, a youngish American tenor. He was both lyrical and heroic, creamy and clarion—you don't get that in every singer. He should have a fine career. But will his simple American name be a hindrance? Would he be better off as "Giovanni Martinelli" or "Fritz Wunderlich"? This is an old, old question—dating from the beginning of the American involvement in opera—and it is amazing that the question endures in 2009. But, according to those who should know, it does.

The production of *Moïse et Pharaon* was by Jürgen Flimm, who is also the artistic director of the Salzburg Festival at large. In the opera, he dressed the Children of Israel as Hasidim, with prayer shawls and all. Whether this was appropriate or wise—those Israelites no doubt looked Jewish. In written materials surrounding the opera, Flimm stressed a connection between *Moïse et Pharaon* and the present-day Arab–Israeli conflict. He said that you could not stage *Moïse et Pharaon*—not now—without reference to that conflict. Some cannot, it is true.

There is always politics at the Salzburg Festival, as I have written before—politics of a particular kind. Salzburg managed to turn *Der Freischütz*, Weber's (Christian) opera from 1821, into an anti-American spectacle. Last season, Flimm did a public reading with Vanessa Redgrave: of poems written by terror detainees in Guantanamo.

Daniel Barenboim has been here this summer, bringing with him his general Barenboimness. (I should mention that he accompanied Anna Netrebko in a song recital, and did so commendably.) And I will tell you about a surprise hit, or semi-hit, of the season: Luigi Nono's opera, or quasi-opera, *Al gran sole carico d'amore* (*In the Bright Sunshine, Charged with Love*).

Nono was an Italian composer who lived from 1924 to 1990. He wrote *Al gran sole* in the mid-1970s, when he was a member of the Central Committee of the Italian CP. The work is an example of the old "theater of consciousness." It is, broadly speaking, a meditation on Communism. Salzburg touted *Al gran sole* with a line from Che Guevara, establisher of the Cuban gulag, and pinup for a billion T-shirts: "Beauty is not opposed to revolution." How has that worked out in practice, when revolution is of the Guevara kind?

A final word: Salzburg literature calls Luigi Nono "certainly the most important Italian composer of the past century." That is debatable. But even if it's true, I think of a famous line of Bill Buckley's, uttered in a similar context: "Isn't that on the order of celebrating the tallest building in Wichita, Kansas?" Italian composition has seen better centuries. **NR**

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Film

Inner Space

ROSS DOUTHAT

THE next time you read about the money that's been poured away bringing some lame, unnecessary science-fiction spectacular to life—the $200 million that Michael Bay spent making the *Transformers* sequel, say, or the similarly lavish figure wasted on the stupid, superfluous *Terminator: Salvation*—it's worth pausing for a moment and pondering how many times over Neill Blomkamp could have made *District 9* for the same amount of cash. Five times? Six times? Seven?

NON-HUMAN TARGET
MNU

SONY PICTURES

Blomkamp, an Afrikaner and a protégé of Peter Jackson, is responsible for the most impressive science-fiction film you'll see this year—or in many years, for that matter. Almost as remarkably, he's responsible for pulling it off on a budget of roughly $30 million, which is about how much money Jackson spent on orc makeup for *Return of the King*. It's enough to make you wonder what kind of movies we might get if the studios instituted a "Blomkamp rule" for their summer blockbusters, and held them all to $30 million worth of sets, star power, and special effects.

What the young South African has produced with his money is a gritty, high-concept twist on the alien-invasion movie. A succession of talking-head interviews, interspliced with news-channel footage, sets up the premise: Twenty years ago, an immense spaceship appeared in the skies above Johannesburg and hung there in baleful silence until we drilled our way inside. What we found, instead of benign light-bringers or malevolent invaders, was a helpless mass of insectish bipeds, filthy and starving: the worker class of an alien species, whose superiors had either perished or abandoned them.

Two decades on, the spaceship is still there, hanging like a vast moon over Joburg, its origin still unknown and many of its secrets still locked. But its passengers—a million strong, and breeding apace—have been transferred to a sprawling refugee camp called District 9, where they subsist on cat food and rubber and coexist uneasily with the human population around them. Frustrated by rising crime and interspecies friction, the South African government decides to transfer them to a new, more distant camp, and contracts that difficult job out to an armed corporation called Multi-National United (MNU), which resembles a cross between the U.N. (complete with white helmets instead of blue), Blackwater Worldwide, and the James Bond movies' SPECTRE.

MNU, in turn, places the operation in the hands of Wikus van der Merwe (the unknown, fantastic Sharlto Copley), the son-in-law of one of the corporation's higher-ups. Ferret-faced and ingratiating, Wikus has the soul of a middle manager and the callousness of an East German bureaucrat. He mugs for the camera amid gunfire, postures like Michael Scott on *The Office* while the aliens are evicted from their makeshift homes, and tugs apart a nest of unborn "prawns" (as humans call them) with a gruesome bonhomie.

As you might expect, Wikus's comeuppance is waiting for him in one of District 9's shanties, where a close encounter with an alien technology makes him a person of interest for MNU's weapons division, then a target for his father-in-law's security forces, and finally an unlikely ally for a savvy prawn dubbed "Christopher Johnson," who has a plan to get his species home. By the time the mad Nigerian gangsters and the giant robotic war machines show up, you'll have almost forgotten that the movie started out as an apartheid allegory narrated by a group of PBS-style social scientists. Which is why the allegory doesn't weigh the movie down: Machine-gun fire, it turns out, is the best way to rescue a politically themed story from heavy-handedness.

What really makes the movie so engrossing, though, is the texture of the world that Blomkamp has brought to life: the look of the aliens, with intelligent eyes buried in squirming mandibles; the vivid squalor of their shantytowns; and the confidence with which the movie moves back and forth between faux-documentary sequences and straightforward storytelling, borrowing the mood of *Cloverfield* and *The Blair Witch Project* without being imprisoned by their form.

The whole thing is impressive enough to make you forgive the various weaknesses of the script, which has its share of holes and lazy shortcuts, and which deals only superficially, if at all, with many of the bigger questions it raises—not only who the aliens are and what they're doing here, but how 20 years of sharing a planet with extraterrestrials has changed the world beyond the movie's Johannesburg horizons.

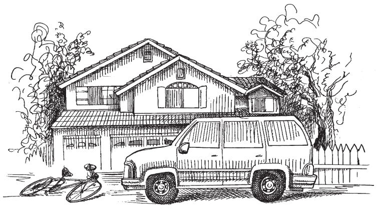
Some of these holes could presumably have been filled, and some of the broader questions answered, if Blomkamp had been granted more than $30 million to work with. As it stands, *District 9* ends evocatively but somewhat unsatisfactorily—with the spacecraft doors left wide open for a sequel. Such a sequel, if it happens, will presumably come equipped with a much more substantial budget.

But of course the cost-conscious guerrilla filmmaking on display in *District 9* is part of what makes the movie such a kick. And even if it's flawless—and follow-ups almost never are—a hypothetical *District 10* won't have the frisson of discovery that comes with entering a clever sub-creation for the first time. This time, Neil Blomkamp snuck up on us. In the future, neither he nor we will be so lucky.

But I still can't wait to see what he does next. **NR**

The Straggler

Creative Destruction



JOHN DERBYSHIRE

My local GM dealer has shut up shop. I drive past the place every day; it is a melancholy sight. Weeds and tall grasses are coming up all around. The forecourt is empty, more weeds beginning to push up through cracks in the concrete. The big display windows have been crudely masked with some reflective sheeting. One already sports a big diagonal crack. The flagpoles out front, from which once flew great carpet-sized editions of Old Glory, have been removed, I suppose to forestall their eventually falling across the highway. The service bays at the side, into which we pulled our '97 Malibu many a time to have its innumerable defects dealt with by a bustling staff of mechanics, are shuttered and silent.

It was bad enough when, 20 years ago, GM's Manhattan showroom was turned into a toy store. Now here is our local dealership looking like a set from that History Channel special about what will happen to the world after humanity has gone. (Gone where? They didn't tell us.) Driving on, I find myself briefly communing with the anonymous Anglo-Saxon poet who, staggering out of his mead-hall one day, found himself looking at the ruins of some Roman palace: "The work of giants is decaying . . ."

Creative destruction, an economist would tell you. He'd have a point. The very next lot to that defunct GM dealership is spick and span, big new buildings freshly painted, late-model trucks parked on the forecourt. This lot belongs to a self-storage firm—one of those places that will rent you a lock-up cubicle to store your stuff. (They do moving, too; hence the trucks.) The buildings are strikingly simple: great windowless cubes painted white with blue trim.

I've been seeing this architectural style all over for 20 years now, though the color schemes differ by firm. Self-storage has been booming. The Yellow Pages for my modest suburban county list over a hundred firms. There is a Self Storage Association ("represents more than 6,000 U.S. member companies"), a trade journal (*Inside Self-Storage*), an expo (Washington, D.C., October 5–8), a training institute, websites, and blogs. Public Storage, the biggest name in the business, has market capitalization of $12 billion and revenues close to $2 billion.

On a whim I stopped by that self-storage facility. There were two employees on the premises: one a middle-aged lady minding a computer and a bank of closed-circuit TV monitors, the other an elderly gent with a bunch of keys. Both were friendly and helpful. The gent—"custodian," he described himself—gave me a guided tour. We walked long corridors lined with different-sized storage units under dim fluorescent lighting.

I played back to the custodian some of the issues I'd read about on the blogs. Employee pilferage? "It's just me with the keys. I'd be fired like a shot." Roof leakages? "Older places maybe. This here's brand new." Damp, mold? "Climate controlled 24/7, five dollars extra." Vermin? "A bird got in once, set off all the motion detectors. I got a call, middle of the night." My literary imagination kicked in. Any strange stuff? Anyone tried to store a corpse? "Not so far. I guess we'd catch the smell soon enough." He opened an empty unit to show me. Five by five, eight feet high, 89 dollars a month. I was still in imaginative territory, thinking of the Dead Letter Office. What if I stop paying? Disappear? Die? What happens to my stuff? "We do due diligence, try to find you, locate next of kin. At last, we auction it off."

Back home I head up to my study in the attic. The study is actually a room I made from one half of the attic. The other half is filled with junk: Christmas decorations, winter clothing and ski gear, luggage, abandoned toys, out-of-favor tchotchkes and crockery, displaced furniture, stacks of old magazines, remnants of construction projects . . . and this is just the attic. There's also the basement, the garage, and the garage loft. How did we accumulate so much junk?

The first four years we were married we lived in a studio apartment in Manhattan, with a bed that folded down out of the wall. The place was so small my wife used to say that if she wanted to put anything down she had to pick something else up first. When we left, we packed everything we owned into a dozen boxes provided by Moishe's moving company. (Ah, Manhattan. One rival firm, run by a feminist co-operative, was named The Mother Truckers.) Now, 20 years on, here we are in a house silted up with possessions.

There are great cosmic principles at work here. Simplicity begets complexity. From ammonites and trilobites come 700 species of dinosaur; the spare teachings of the Master call forth annotations, exegesis, and commentary upon commentary; from the convenience of a phone call we advance to e-mail inbox folders, texting, MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter. There were originally three federal crimes; there are now, according to one scholar's tally, at least 4,452. (Did you know that as of 2002 it was a federal crime to move birds across state lines to engage in fights?)

Then comes the cleansing fire, the creative destruction. An asteroid strike brings worldwide winter and mass extinctions; a barbarian horde burns the great library; GM becomes Motors Liquidation Company (even the ticker symbol "GM" has been retired); a solar storm obliterates all electronic records and services. That last one is actually on the cards. In 1859 the sun ejected a blob of charged plasma that, when it hit the Earth, shorted out telegraph services. A computer is far, far more sensitive than an 1859 telegraph, our electronic civilization correspondingly more fragile.

The phrase "cleansing fire" stirs uncomfortable thoughts, though. Do I have a fire extinguisher in the attic? I think I do, somewhere behind those stacked bundles of old magazines and the kids' elementary-school art projects. "Some say the world will end in fire, / Some say in ice," mused Robert Frost. Our modern suspicion, on view in the recent movies *Idiocracy* and *WALL-E*, is that it will end in *stuff*: great heaped drifts of discarded clothes, toys, books, papers, knick-knacks, furniture, electronics, vehicles, exercise machines, spare parts. Perhaps self-storage will at least keep it all out of sight for a while. **NR**

Happy Warrior

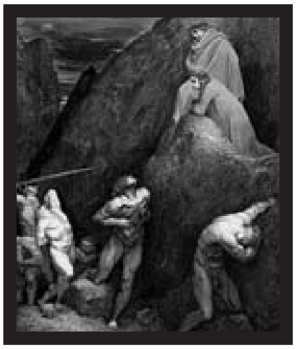
BY MARK STEYN

Sharia in New Haven

WHENEVER I write about Europe and demography, I get a lot of mail on the general line of "Oh yeah, Steyn? When will Muslims be 50.01 percent of the population then? 2020? 2030? C'mon, you scaremonger . . ."

And I usually reply that it's not about hitting 50 percent. It's about the point at which mediating between the Muslim population and the broader population becomes a central and then the dominant feature of the culture. In Northern Ireland, the Loyalists outnumbered the Republicans by two to one more or less, but an arithmetical majority didn't prevent 30 years of, to put it at its mildest, profound destabilization. And once you're in that situation the question becomes: What are you prepared to trade away in an attempt to restabilize?

Ezra Levant, my comrade in Canada's free-speech wars, was hauled in for interrogation by the Alberta "Human Rights" Commission for publishing the famous Danish cartoons of Mohammed. After three years of harassment by a malign alliance of radical Islamists and the multicultural state, he's come to the conclusion that the cartoon crisis has done more damage to North America's "culture of liberty" than 9/11. You can see what he means. In the long run, the ostensibly trivial matter of some undistinguished drawings in an obscure provincial newspaper in a nation way out on the periphery of the horizon may yet prove to be more significant than a direct violent assault on the citadels of American power. September 11 was a bloody provocation that was met with a vigorous display of will: Within a few weeks al-Qaeda's training camps were smashed to smithereens, and its patrons in Kabul had hitched up their robes and fled. The cartoon crisis was a minor, albeit murderous, affair that rippled across the globe to be met by a dismal lack of will by almost every panjandrum of Western civilization, from European Union commissioners to Canada's ghastly "human rights" regime. As the years go by, that seems the more relevant template.



Mohammed, *by Gustave Doré*

GUSTAVE DORÉ: *MOHAMMED*

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the damage done by Euro-Canadian appeasers, an American institution has now effortlessly outpaced them. Having commissioned a book on the subject of the cartoons, Yale University Press has decided that it will appear without any illustration of said subject matter. The author is not a scaremongering blowhard like Ezra and me but a respected Brandeis University professor, Jytte Klausen. Insofar as I understand the thesis of *The Cartoons That Shook the World*, Professor Klausen argues that the crisis was artificially whipped up for political purposes and that, therefore, one should draw no broader conclusions about Muslim culture and its relationship with the West. You could hardly ask for a more telling comment on that thesis than the publishers' decision to yank the illustrations, including not only the cartoons but other representations of Mohammed, such as Gustave Doré's depiction of the Prophet being disemboweled in Hell. This scene from Dante's *Inferno* has also been visually rendered by, among others, Botticelli, William Blake, Salvador Dalí, and Rodin, all of whose images have been reproduced in hundreds of books. Yet, with nary a thought, Yale has extended the de facto prohibition on new Mohammedan depictions into a retrospective airbrushing of the historical record. This is an astonishing thing for a scholarly institution to do, especially one whose motto is *Lux et veritas*. In nixing Gustave Doré, they have, in effect, said the entire Western inheritance is up for grabs. Not all of it, not immediately. The *lux* will be dimmed incrementally, bulb by bulb, and, after a while, as what would once have "shook the world" ceases even to be reported, you won't even notice it.

The official explanation was the threat of violence. Not any actual violence, and, as it turns out, not even any actual threats. After Roger Kimball poked around a bit, it emerged that the decision to ban both the Danes and Doré was driven not by editors or publishers at YUP but by the very biggest bigwigs of the university itself. The experts were contacted by "the Office of the President," no less. On its face, the decision to gut its own reputation for editorial and scholarly integrity seems to owe less to unspecified fears of jihadist nuts blowing up a university bookstore than to a cooler calculation of its strategic interests, including (so Mr. Kimball suggests) continued access to wealthy Muslim benefactors.

Yale has thus provided us with a perfect snapshot of where we're headed. When I fought back against attempts by the Canadian Islamic Congress to get my writing criminalized north of the border, various American readers wrote to say: "Why bother? Who cares about Canada? We've got the First Amendment, and nobody's going to ban you here." That's not how the world works, no matter the fond isolationist illusions of Ron Paul types. Restive European Muslims and unlimited Saudi money can put pressure on American publishers, institutions, and media that will eventually render the First Amendment moot. In Denmark and other countries, craven accommodationists can at least plead that they have incendiary majority-Muslim suburbs with 50 percent youth unemployment. That's not true of New Haven, where the honchos seem to be using fear of violence as a cover for the appetites of their endowment. In other words, they're merely posing as contemptible Euroweenies. Which, when you think about it, is even more contemptible.

In 2006, during the original cartoon jihad, a Muslim demonstrator in Toronto spelled it out: "We won't stop the protests until the world obeys Islamic law."

It sounded vaguely ridiculous at the time. And yet, without the demographic pressures of Europe, a scholarly publisher in Connecticut now "obeys Islamic law." Who's next? **NR**

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